

Rhododendron News

Bimonthly Publication since 1998



Chin Human Rights Organization

ချင်းလူ့အခွင့်အရေးအဖွဲ့

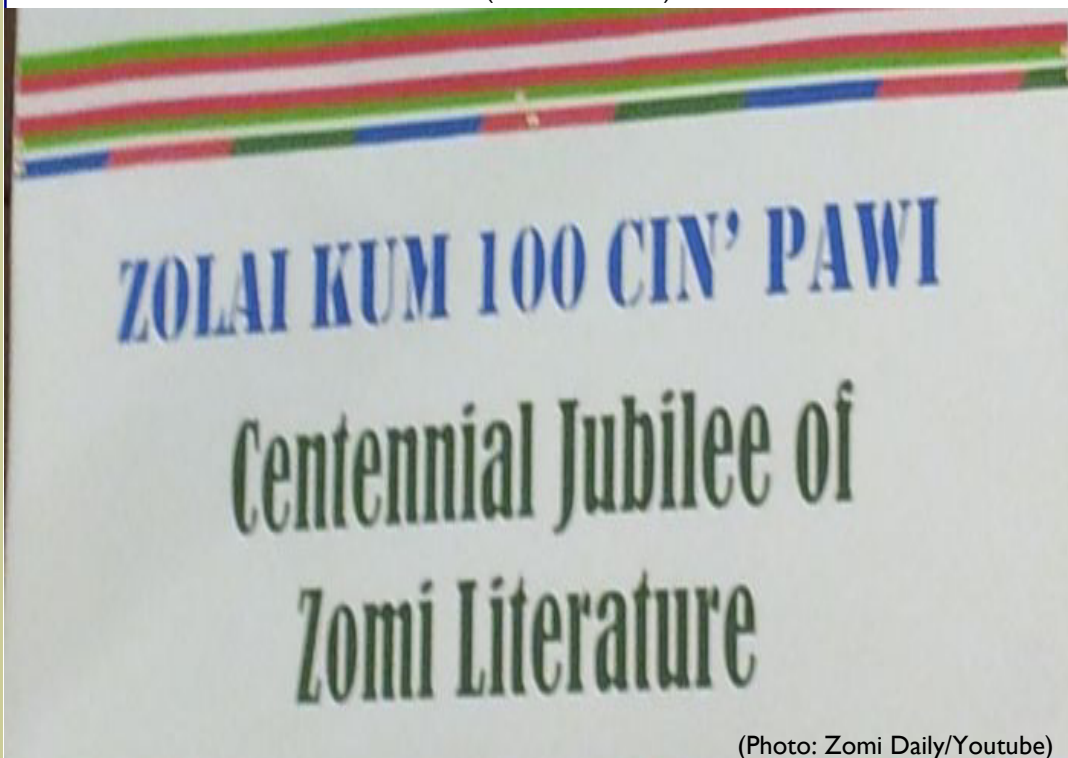
CHRO.CA

Volume XVIII, Issue III

May-June 2015



Saplings being planted on top of Mount Rung, where LIB 266 is based in Hakha (Photo: CHRO)



(Photo: Zomi Daily/Youtube)

**Chin Human Rights
Organization (CHRO)**

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

Ph: 1-613-843-9484
Email: info@chro.ca
Web: www.chro.ca

Table of Contents

Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion	Page 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Army confiscate land owned by local • Hakha police demand money for free letter 	
Freedom of Religion	Page 4-5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chin students to resume 'banned' church construction • Chin Christian pastor's building stoned in Yesagyo • State authorities hold meeting on Sunday 	
Forced Labour	Page 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govt order employees to plant saplings in Hakha 	
Other Human Rights Violations	Page 7-10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govt order Chin women to stop human rights training • Chin conflict victims ordered to return to villages • Govt refuse permission to publish news in Chin dialect • Chin university student died after knife attack in Delhi • Authorities destroy Christian cemetery in Kalay • High school students buy desks, chairs for classes in Paletwa • Soldiers use houses, churches in Paletwa for temporary camp 	
Humanitarian & Development Situation	Page 10-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khumi youth deliver relief aid to conflict victims • Chin conflict victims move shelter owing to bad weather • Chin conflict victims to teach children at camp • Chin State's matriculation exam results lowest in Burma • Govt to plan new Arakan-Chin bridge construction • Authorities urged to provide humanitarian aid to Chin conflict victims • Families evacuated after Hakha landslides • Landslide kills two women in Hakha 	
Event & Protest	Page 14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hakha residents protest against police quarters construction • Death of Salai Tin Maung Oo commemorated in Delhi 	
Situation of Refugees	Page 15-16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dozens of Chin refugees arrested in Malaysia • Chin refugee couple beaten up in Delhi • Chin refugee father attacked, mugged in Delhi • Chin refugee family evicted by Indian landlord in Delhi 	
Other News	Page 17-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House fire kills elderly woman in Hakha township • Shop-owners encouraged to use names in Chin • Burma returns 18 detained Mizos to India • Media, communities blamed for low voter registration in Chin State • Immigration, police check passenger ID in Matupi 	
Government	Page 19-22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN urge Burma's govt to end impunity • Chin State plans to protect women and children • Chin peace group reviews govt-CNF agreement implementation • State govt building contractor fined for falling behind schedule • Govt dept criticised for bad condition of Hakha road • Corruption blamed for persistence in opium cultivation in Chin State 	
Interview	Page 22-24
Independent investigation for missing Khumi Chin: Interview with Rachel Fleming	
Statement	Page 24-26
Caught in the crossfire: Chin civilians bear brunt of conflict in Paletwa, Chin State	

Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

Army confiscate land owned by local

05 June 2015 -- Sergeant Min Soe, of Matupi-based Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 140, confiscated a plot of land temporarily rented from a local, Pu Thla Poel, son of the land-owner, reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization.

The sergeant had rented the land (big enough for five houses) from Van Boi, from Phaneng village, since 2003, constructed a department store and eventually claimed that it belonged to the army. Poel said that the land had been inherited from their forefathers for generations.

Soe, who is currently serving as a military police, has

been using the premises, located on the Matupi-Hakha road at the entrance to Phaneng, for more than 10 years for his own business, selling beer and other commodities.

Poel said that Soe had destroyed their trees (estimated to be more than 4,000 in total) including mangoes, bananas, pineapples, oranges, jackfruits, and tea plants for the construction.

After the instalment of the tactical operations command No. 2 in Matupi in 2003, the army confiscated Sabawng Ward cemetery and 40 plots of land belonging to Phaneng villagers. Until today, the army have not returned the land or given any compensation to the villagers.#

Hakha Township Police Force
(Photo: Chinland Guardian)



Hakha police demand money for free letter

17 June 2015 -- The Hakha Township Police Force has been accused of demanding money for issuing a 'police clearance letter' to the people.

Job applicants who are required to obtain the letter said that they had to pay a certain amount of money to the police officers for what was supposed to be free of charge.

Mai C, who wants to remain anonymous, told the

Chin Human Rights Organization: "My friend and I went to the police office to get the letter. When we asked them how much it cost, they didn't tell us it was free."

"Instead, they said it was up to how much we could contribute," said the 18-year-old who wanted to apply for a government job in Hakha.

A Hakha university student said that she had been asked for tea money just before being handed the letter.

The Township Police Office didn't comment.#

Freedom of Religion



Chin students to resume 'banned' church construction

01 May 2015 -- The Technological Christian Fellowship is planning to resume construction of the church building which had been banned by the authorities and villagers in Tayawaddy, Sagaing Region.

Salai Van Thawng Thang, a TCF leader, said in the *Chinland Today* news that they would try to talk with village administrators, Buddhist monks and local residents.

He added that they would also meet with the head of the Government Technological College.

"As far as we can, we would like to follow what the villagers want. We believe there will be no problems this time," Thang said.

The plan is the TCF's attempt to implement the agree-

ment made in June last year by a group of Chin university students in Kalay.

In 2008, construction materials, including pillars, wood planks and bricks, piled inside the compound of the planned church building were taken away and destroyed by Tayawaddy villagers.

Following the issue, Christian students faced difficulties in renting a place to stay in the village and were threatened for holding worship services at their makeshift tent.

"We are not planning to evangelize the locals. The building will also be used for students who are in a difficult situation during their studies," Thang said.

He added that if they were still denied clearance to proceed with their planned construction, they would not just sit tight, adding: "We will take to the streets if necessary."#

Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)

www.chro.ca

2-Montavista Avenue, Nepean, K2J 2L3, Canada
Ph: 1-613-843-9484; Email: info@chro.ca

Chin Christian pastor's building stoned in Yesagyo

23 June 2015 -- Stones were thrown at a building in which a Chin Christian pastor and his family live in Yesagyo town, Magwe Region.

Chin pastor Rev. Zung Hlei Sum said that his building had been attacked with stones at around 9:50pm and 11:10pm on Saturday and around 9:35pm last night.

He said that he had not known who they were but he believed their action had to be in connection with the court case last year.

In May 2014, the Yesagyo Township Criminal Court had dropped the charges against the Chin pastor who was accused of illegally constructing a religious building in his compound.

Sum said that the building had also been stoned soon after the end of the court case last year.

"As we are preparing for a Christian meeting at the building next week, this happens. I am not sure if it is related or not. But parts of our compound fence and roof are destroyed," Sum said.

"They also entered our compound secretly early in the morning and damaged our chairs with stones, which were wrapped in cloths in order to make less noise," Sum added.

He said that he had reported the incident to the Yesagyo police, adding: "They told me that they would come but they haven't turned up till today."

"We don't want this to happen again. This has got to be stopped. We would like the authorities to take necessary action in association with community leaders," Sum said. #

State authorities hold meeting on Sunday

29 June 2015 -- The authorities of the Chin State government met in the Hakha town hall yesterday, discussing a draft education law.

An education research group from Rangoon led the event which was attended by Chief Minister Hung Ngai, other State ministers and State-level department officials.

And Hakha district-level teachers as well as Chin MPs, town-elders and community leaders also participated in it.

Speaking to the Chin Human Rights Organization on condition of anonymity, a Chin Christian government employee, who attended the meeting, said: "We were not able to go to church as it started around 9:15am."

She said that they had thought there would be no more meeting on Sunday after President Thein Sein had said during his visit to the State in February 2015.

In his speech at the event, Chief Minister Hung Ngai made an apology for holding the meeting on Sunday, saying that it actually took place across the country on the same date.

Salai Lian, a Hakha community leader, said: "This issue has been raised to the authorities for years and it still happens. Why don't they hold the meeting after church services which normally finish around 12 noon? This is again intentionally planned in order for us, Christians, to miss our worship service."

A source from the State government said that it had been the programme of the State Education Department and that they had initially been responsible for the event.

Lian said: "The meeting would not have happened if the State authorities had not granted permission to the relevant department. So, they must have already known that it would take place on Sunday." #

"This issue has been raised to the authorities for years and it still happens. Why don't they hold the meeting after church services ...? This is again intentionally planned in order for us, Christians, to miss our worship service."

- Salai Lian

Forced Labour



Saplings being planted on top of Mount Rung, where LIB 266 is based in Hakha
(Photo: CHRO)

Govt order employees to plant saplings in Hakha

13 June 2015 -- The government of Chin State gave orders for department employees to plant saplings on Mount Rung today.

Civil servants from all government departments and soldiers from the Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 266 based on Mount Rung planted about 1,000 young trees around 7am.

A government employee, who speaks on condition of anonymity, told the Chin Human Rights Organization: "The government administration department called our office and asked us for a list of employees who would participate in the tree-planting activity."

"They didn't say that action would be taken if an employee didn't turn up. But it was not voluntary but compulsory. In a way, it was an indirect way of forcible act."

Hundreds of government employees turned up this morning on Mount Rung overlooking Hakha, getting involved in a window dressing programme, a rainy season all-department tree-planting ceremony.

A government source said that the programme was held across the country on the same day.

"This has been going on for years now but we have not seen any real progress. The main reason is that there is no maintenance programme and that it is purely symbolic," said the Hakha government employee.

During his official visit to Chin State in February this year, President Thein Sein said that no government employees would be forced to provide 'labour contribution' on Saturday, Sunday and holidays officially designated by the Union government.

Salai Thang, a Hakha resident, said: "What the authorities said and did are different. What is written on the document and what has actually been implemented are almost all the time opposite. Now, they will start talking about planting trees to make our land green. But they are the ones who destroy our forests."#

"This has been going on for years now but we have not seen any real progress. The main reason is that there is no maintenance programme and that it is purely symbolic,"

- Hakha government employee.

Other Human Rights Violation

Govt order Chin women to stop human rights training

14 May 2015 -- The authorities issued official letters ordering the Chin Women's Organization to stop their ongoing human rights training in Mindat, Chin State.

Ngwe Doe, head of the Mindat Township General Administration Department, said that official permission was not obtained for the training and that action would be taken in accordance with the law if it continued.

In his letter to the CWO yesterday, he said that they didn't submit information about invited trainers, brief accounts of topics they would present and other documents including an authorisation letter from the local administrator.

He added that they should also include a letter from the trainers promising that they would not talk about politics at the event.

The training, organized from 11 to 15 May by the

CWO and the Chin Youth Organization in collaboration with the Equality Myanmar, (formerly called Human Rights Education Institute of Burma) a non-governmental organization that facilitates a broad range of human rights education and advocacy programs, started on Monday.

On 4 May, Khin Win Yi, a Mindat CWO leader, had written a letter to the head of the Mindat General Administration Department regarding the planned human rights training.

However, Shing Ha Law, head of the ward general administration, last Monday ordered the organizers to stop their training being held at the house of U Law Ngai starting from 11 May 2015, immediately.

On Tuesday, Ngwe Doe had written a letter to U Law Ngai, informing him not to allow the training at his house as the organizing groups are not officially registered and didn't get permission from the authorities.

Last month, the government of Chin State didn't grant permission to a Falam youth group for holding human rights training in Falam town.#

Chin conflict victims ordered to return to villages

18 May 2015 -- Hundreds of Chin villagers displaced by conflicts between the Burma Army and Arakan Army have been ordered to return to their homes.

The tactical operations commander of the Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 289 gave the order that the victims should get back to their villages by 23 May, according to the *Khumi Media Group*.

A villager, who wants to remain anonymous, told the KMG: "We are told to go back home as soon as possible. Of course, we want to go home but we don't feel safe going home. We didn't come here just because we wanted to."

The villager said that they had to start going back to their villages from 18 May according to the order.

A community leader, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "We are shocked to learn that they have to return home immediately. How are they going to

live as we know it is not safe?"

"The authorities must ensure security first and tell villagers to go home with necessary support in place. We don't know why they gave an order like this while people are very worried and in trouble."

In a meeting held in Rangoon last week, the Chin Family Political Parties expressed their grave concern over conflict victims stranded in Paletwa Township, Chin State and in Arakan State, indicating that necessary action had to be taken.

Since March this year, there have been skirmishes between soldiers from the Arakan Army and Burma Army in parts of Chin and Arakan States, forcing villagers to flee into hiding.#

ZOLAI KUM 100 CIN' PAWI

Centennial Jubilee of Zomi Literature

(Photo: Zomi Daily/Youtube)

Govt refuse permission to publish news in Chin dialect

24 May 2015 -- The authorities in Burma didn't grant permission for publication of news in Zolai, a dialect widely spoken in northern parts of Chin State.

Deputy Union Minister of Information Pike Htwe said that the application for publishing a newspaper in Zolai had been rejected because it could cause further division among the ethnic tribal groups.

He added that if publication in Zolai was granted, it would draw similar applications from other tribes and hence make it even more difficult as there are many dialects in Chin State.

Meanwhile, the Chin Media Network condemned the deputy Union minister for rejecting such a request, saying that it was constituted a governmental act of discrimination against ethnic nationalities while publication in Burmese had been granted.

In a statement released yesterday, the CMN said that it was a denial of the basic human rights of ethnic peoples and was also a violation of freedom of expression by the authorities.

Article 22 of the 2008 Constitution says that the Union shall assist to the development of language, literature, fine arts and culture of the national races.

The group called on the government of Burma to stop banning publication in ethnic languages of newspapers.#

Chin university student died after knife attack in Delhi

03 June 2015 – A Chin student studying political science at Delhi University died at the Mata Chanan Devi Hospital around 6am today after being stabbed in the stomach at night yesterday.

Chuah Ceu, 28, was knifed in an unprovoked attack by an unknown South Asian while he was taking a walk in his neighborhood with his two friends, Sang Duh and Khamh Bawi, who were a few yards ahead of him.

Duh, in his late twenties, told the Chin Human Rights Organization that Ceu had been walking be-

hind them around 11:30pm while Bawi and he had been talking.

"All of a sudden, we heard Ceu shouting saying 'I am attacked'. We turned around and saw he was sitting alone on the road pressing his right rib. We just thought he was pulling our leg."

Bawi saw a man close to Ceu running away from them and shouted at him in Hindi to stop. "Bawi ran after him but lost him when he turned right in the dark," said Duh.

"As Ceu was lying on the ground, I checked his head first but didn't see any injuries. When I opened his shirt, it was bleeding profusely and I saw

what I thought were his intestines. I was shocked and did not what to do at first. I told Bawi to carry him while I was rushing to get a taxi."

Around midnight, Ceu was taken to an emergency room at the Mata Chanan Devi Hospital. Duh said that the doctor had told them the victim had needed surgery right away.

Following the operation, the doctor said that the victim's intestines had been sliced from two places, that his liver had also been cut and that he had been in a critical condition.

The hospital reported the case to police once the victim was admitted.

The president of the Chin Refugee Committee told the CHRO: "We had waited for the police to come to the hospital till 4:00am. The secretary of the Hakha community in Delhi also dialed the police helpline but no luck."

He said that the police eventually had shown up around 7:00 am and started an investigation.

"We are not safe in Delhi and there is no one to help us while we are dying although they hear our voices and cries," said the president. "We waited for the Delhi police with so much hope but there was no police to help Burmese refugees."

"It is hate crime that we are most afraid of and we are worried about our security as we are not sure if we will still face the consequences of this case. This crime is committed so smoothly by an expert criminal due to hatred and this is the most heinous crime we, refugees from Burma, have ever faced by in New Delhi," said CRC's president.

Chuah Ceu, son of Tha Ling and lang Nawn, from Hriphi village, Thantlang Township, Chin State, is a second-year student of a Bachelor of Political Science.#



Authorities destroy Christian cemetery in Kalay

05 June 2015 -- The authorities in Kalay, Sagaing Region yesterday forcibly bulldozed a Taungphila Christian cemetery that Chin churches have owned for more than 40 years.

Members of the Township Municipal Department and other government officials together with the police providing security razed the cemetery to the ground early in the morning, according to the *Chin World Media*.

Residents in the area said that it was brought to destruction by the authorities, without the knowledge of

the Chin Christian groups.

In March 2014, the Township Municipal Committee and the District Administration Committee had stopped their attempt to destroy it after protests from the

Christian fellowship.

A Christian pastor said that the case had been raised to the parliament last year.

U Maung Htoo, chairman of the Kalay District Administration Committee, said that he had made promises that the cemetery would not be destroyed but remain as it was, according to the pastor.

It was officially registered in 1970 as religious land by Chin Christians and is shared by four Christian churches, with about 700 families.

The area of Taungphila was first settled by nine Chin families on 25 December 1914, according to the *Chin World Media*.#

School students buy desks, chairs for classes in Paletwa

28 June 2015 -- Some high school students in Paletwa town, Chin State are required to bring their own chairs and desks for studying in their classes.

A Paletwa elder told the *Khumi Media Group* that students at the Basic Education High

School branch had to buy chairs and desks as the school didn't provide them for them.

"The government just built a school building. So, students had to get on their own what they needed to use in the classes," he said.

School teachers said that only new students had been asked to buy two pieces of chairs and desks.#

"The government just built a school building. So, students had to get on their own what they needed to use in the classes."

Soldiers use houses, churches in Paletwa for temporary camp

30 June 2015 - Burma army soldiers from the Light Infantry Battalion No. 377 forcibly used private houses and church buildings for temporary camps in Paletwa Township, Chin State.

A resident in Yetakhun village said that they had come to stay in villages following clashes between the Burma Army and the Arakan Army since late March.

House-owner Ai B (name changed for security reason) was beaten around 4pm on 18 June 2015 by soldiers after he didn't allow them to stay in his house, accord-

ing to the *Khumi Media Group*.

He told the soldiers that he had got several family members and that his house had not been big enough even for his own family.

The Yetakhun villager said: "He was swollen as he was beaten by soldiers after he had refused them to stay in his house."

In Tabawkan village, soldiers were encamped at a church building.

Villages said that they were allowed to hold worship services on Sunday.#

Humanitarian & Development Situation

Khumi youth deliver relief aid to conflict victims

02 May 2015 -- A Khumi youth group from Paletwa Township, Chin State provided rice and plastic tarpaulins for Chin villagers displaced by conflicts between the Arakan Army and the Burma Army.

Last Thursday, the youth volunteers delivered 28 bags of rice (one bag weighs about 50 kg) and 3,000 yards of plastic sheets for temporary rainproof shelters to the Chin IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), according to the *Khumi Media Group*.

Steven, chairman of the youth group, said: "When we got there, at least 23 families had nothing to eat for dinner. And about 46 families will run out of food tomorrow."

He said that there were four children who had fallen sick.

He added that they had written an official letter to the Paletwa Township General Administration head requesting supplies of humanitarian assistance.

"We haven't got any official responses. But it was verbally suggested to us that we write a letter to the Chin State government in order to get relief aid for the conflict victims," Steven said.

It was the first time the Chin victims had been reached with humanitarian aid since they were forced to flee the exchanges of fire between the two armies in March and April.

At least 370, mostly from Pyin-so village, have been taking shelter on the shore along the Kaladan river and about another 340 have fled to Kywetaung village.#

Chin conflict victims move shelter owing to bad weather

06 May 2015 -- Strong winds and heavy rains forced dozens of Chin villagers displaced by conflicts to move out from their temporary shelters along the Kaladan river into nearby places.

Steven, a Khumi youth group leader, said that it was dangerous for them to stay on the shores as bad weather hit the area, and that most of them had moved to nearby villages including Lohtin since last Saturday.

In an attempt to facilitate flows of relief assistance to the victims, community leaders formed two emergency relief committees, one in Pyin-so village

and the other in Rangoon, according to the Khumi Media Group.

"Some are staying at village houses while others build new shelters in and near the villages," said Steven.

More than an estimated 400 villagers have been taking shelter after fleeing fighting between the Burma Army and Arakan Army since March.

Meanwhile, the authorities in Arakan State said that at least 20 people detained on suspicion of having connections with the Arakan Army were to face interrogation by the police.

According to the Irrawaddy news, they could be charged under the Unlawful Association Act. #

Chin conflict victims to teach children at camp

31 May 2015 -- Chin villagers displaced by clashes between the Burma Army and the Arakan Army are building a makeshift school to teach their children in Paletwa Township, Chin State.

The Chin IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) told the *Khumi Media Group* that they were making an effort to improvise a temporary place for their children to study at their Lohtin camp.

"We are afraid of going back to our village. Although we are here at our temporary camp, we want our children to study. So, we are building a makeshift school for them," said a Chin victim.

The *Khumi Media Group* said that the head of the Township Education Department had reportedly come to their camp and provided school uniforms for children.

Soldiers from the two armies had clashed at least four times since March this year, forcing hundreds of villagers in Chin and Arakan States into hiding. #

Chin State's matriculation exam results lowest in Burma

07 June 2015 -- The percentage of students passing Grade 10 examination in Chin State stood at the bottom of the nationwide results table in Burma.

Only 17.84 per cent got through the government-supervised exam in the country's western state while Irrawaddy Region had the highest number with 51.78 per cent.

In Burma's least developed region, 1,720 out of 9,638 students in total passed the matriculation exam, according to the statistics announced last Saturday by the Examinations Department of the

Ministry of Education.

The State remains lowest in the table although this year's results are an increase on 8.07 per cent in 2014, in which only 704 out of the total 8,721 students passed the exam.

In Chin State, Hakha township has the highest percentage of 25.74, with Tedim 25.02, Falam 22.55, Mindat 22.39, Kanpetlet 20.86, Tonzang 12, Thantlang 8.52, Matupi 7.95 and Paletwa 7.37.

The statistics for the results in the whole country shows that 224,847 out of the total 597,946 passed the exams, making the overall figure 37.60 per cent. #

Govt to plan new Arakan-Chin bridge construction

11 June 2015 -- The Union government is planning to conduct a survey on the requirements of a new bridge that will connect Chin and Arakan States.

According to the Pyithu Hluttaw, the Ministry of Construction will lead the survey team to get an estimate of designs and costs for the bridge con-

struction.

The *Global New Light of Myanmar* today said that the cost would be 'submitted to the Union government and the Union Assembly in 2016-2017 fiscal year for approval.

Soe Tint, deputy minister of Construction, said that the bridge would be 1,200 feet long and 50 feet high from the water level of the Kaladan river.#

Authorities urged to provide humanitarian aid to Chin conflict victims

16 June 2015 -- The Chin Human Rights Organization urged the government of Burma to take necessary action to provide humanitarian assistance to Chin victims of conflicts between the Burma Army and the Arakan Army.

In a statement released yesterday, the CHRO said that the authorities should cooperate with UN agencies and the international community to allow unhindered access to more than 350 Khumi Chin internally displaced persons in Paletwa Township, Chin State.

It said that they would be running out of food supplies before the end of this month. It added that the 350 IDPs – of whom 141 are children - urgently need food, medical care and medicine, additional latrines, and construction materials.

At the end of March, the Arakan Army attacked their village, Pyin So, where there is a Burma Army military outpost, forcing residents to flee, according to the CHRO.

Subsequently, the AA ordered the villagers to dig a grave and bury the body of Burma Army Captain Kyaw Htet Aung who was killed during the fighting.

And the AA forced another ten men to porter their loads for them to the border with Bangladesh.

Rachel Fleming, CHRO's Advocacy Director, said "This is yet another case where ordinary civilians, this time Khumi Chin indigenous people, bear the brunt of armed conflict in Burma and suffer human rights violations. The long-standing pattern of abuses hasn't stopped; in fact we see it escalating in the Paletwa area."

In the lead-up to the outbreak of conflict, the CHRO also documented two cases of child soldier recruitment and one of forced recruitment by the Burma Army in the Paletwa area.

The CHRO called on the authorities of Burma to stop the pressure on IDPs to return to their village - reportedly contaminated with landmines - and respect their right to voluntary return in safety and dignity.

Fleming said: "The pressure from the authorities to return home violates the rights of the IDPs. Instead, the authorities should be consulting with them for long-term solutions, in accordance with the right to free, prior and informed consent."

"Voluntary return in safety and dignity is a right, not an obligation. And in this case it would require humanitarian landmine clearance and security guarantees from the authorities."

At least four clashes had taken place between the Burma Army and the Arakan Army since March this year.#

"The pressure from the authorities to return home violates the rights of the IDPs. Instead, the authorities should be consulting with them for long-term solutions, in accordance with the right to free, prior and informed consent."

**- Rachel Fleming,
CHRO's Advocacy
Director**



Part of the Hakha landslides putting families in danger (Photo: CG)

Families evacuated after Hakha landslides

19 June 2015 -- Heavy rains causing landslides in Hakha around 2pm yesterday forced at least 18 families to evacuate from their houses.

And more houses on Olive Road and Tlangbo Sang road were put in danger as there were cracks on the ground on a steep hillside.

However, no houses were destroyed and no casualties reported.

An Olive road resident told the Chin Human Rights Organization that it had been the first time she had come across such a dangerous situation in twenty

years.

"This actually happened soon after the road in front of our house was widened with big bulldozers and backhoes last month," she said.

A resident on Tlangbo Sang Road said that the new roadwork had been left without a proper drainage system, adding: "Some waters are stagnating here and there and they make the soil damp and weak. That is what has made landslides

happen."

Hung Ngai, chief minister of the Chin State government, together with State ministers, visited the site, urging members of the fire brigade, the municipal department and the police force to build a wall to keep soil from moving downwards.

A community leader said: "What he told them to do is not a solution to the problems related to landslides. We need something practical that gives us a long-term solution. And he didn't say anything about providing assistance to those affected families."

The families are temporarily staying in the houses of neighbours and relatives.#

Landslide kills two women in Hakha

20 June 2015 -- Hours-long continuous rains caused a landslide in Hakha at about 9:30am today, killing two women who were building a brick wall on the site.

The two victims, Tial Tin Mawi, 21, mother of a 2-year-old child, and Par Zi, 21, were buried dead beneath the landslide while they were working on the new Hakha road.

Ms Phir Khen, a co-worker, said in the Hakha Post: "They were carrying buckets of soil on the edge of the road and we were working below them. Suddenly, we heard a loud noise made by the landslide that had fallen upon them but it didn't reach us."

Minutes later, their bodies were uncovered with a backhoe by members of the fire brigade, the police force and youth group.

Pu Hrang Tiam, a retired assistant engineer, said in the Hakha Post that roadwork should not be done during the rainy season as the soil got damp and could easily be shaken when digging machines were used.

Salai Uk, a carpenter who used to work near the site, told the Chinland Guardian: "I think the landslide happened after a terraced hillside was destroyed following construction of the new road."

Mawi, from Hniarlawn village, and Zi, from Dauchim village, had just started working for the road construction for only a few days.#

Event & Protest

Hakha residents protest against police quarters construction

06 June 2015 -- Leaders of the Hakha elders expressed their strong opposition to the plans to construct new police quarters upstream of the historic lake in Hakha, Chin State.

They said that they had strongly disapproved of the proposals by Myint Lwin, head of the Hakha Police Force, to build police quarters at the source of the soldier lake, locally known as Ralkap Tili, at the foot of Mount Rung.

Hrang Vung, secretary of the Hakha Elders, said in the Hakha Post that they had tried, according to their General Meeting on 16 May, three times to meet with Myint Lwin regarding the matter but he had not been available.

"We could only meet with his juniors. The fact that he didn't want to meet with us has made us wonder

about what has been going on," Vung said.

Some residents in the two wards of Pyidawta and Dawrhulun and offices in the surrounding area depend on water from the lake.

The leaders said that they would like to protect the historic lake of the town and preserve the forest, the source of water to the lake, part of Mount Rung.

They added that the proposed construction would not only destroy the forest but also make the lake dry and hence cut off the water source.

Meanwhile, state government officials including Ram Mang, minister of Planning and Economics, and Kyaw Ngein, minister of Forestry and Mines, reportedly inspected other locations for the construction following the protest.

This month, Hakha residents under the leadership of Minister Kyaw Ngein plan to plant trees in more than 1,000 acres on Mount Rung.#

(Photo: CHRO)

dent leader in Burma, who was secretly hanged in Insein Prison on 26 June 1976.

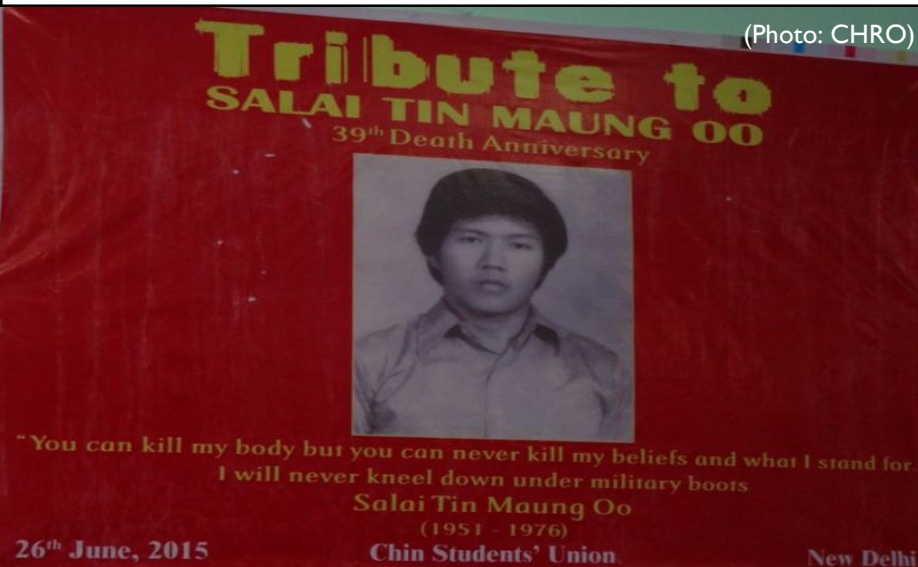
About 60 people from different communities and non-governmental organizations participated in the memorial service.

Key speakers invited at the event included Sayadaw U Pin Ngya Zawta, a Buddhist monk and 2007 Saffron Revolution activist, Ko Ngyo Tun, an Insein prison mate of Salai Tin Maung Oo, Pu Biak Tha Hmun, president of the

Chin Refugee Committee in Delhi, Salai Cung Dawt, from the Chin Human Rights Organization, and Mai Phoebe, CSU vice president.

Rev. Nehemiah Sui Nei Piang, senior pastor of the Delhi Burmese Christian Fellowship, led a session for laying wreaths in tribute to Burma's student leader Salai Tin Maung Oo.

The anniversary is annually held in Delhi by the CSU.#



Death of Salai Tin Maung Oo commemorated in Delhi

27 June 2015 -- Refugees from Burma based in New Delhi, India gathered at the Chin Christian Fellowship (CCF) hall yesterday, commemorating the death of Salai Tin Maung Oo.

The event, organized by the Chin Student Union (CSU), marked the 39th anniversary of the Chin stu-

Situation of Refugees

Dozens of Chin refugees arrested in Malaysia

04 May 2015 -- The Malaysian authorities carried out an evening operation in an attempt to crack down on illegal immigrants in Kuala Lumpur, arresting at least 72 Chins last Wednesday.

It was conducted from 6pm to 8pm in San Peng, Loke Yew and Pudu by police and RELA Corps, a paramilitary civil volunteer corps, together with the Immigration Department and the Criminal Investigation Department.

The Alliance of Chin Refugees, a community-based Chin refugee organization, said that the authorities had raided homes and taken Chin refugees, both UNHCR registered and non-registered.

The *Faiceu Media Group*, a Chin newsletter printed

in Kuala Lumpur, reportedly said that staff members of the Outreach and Protection Intervention Unit of the UNHCR had participated in the Wednesday operation.

It also reported that the areas targeted constituted parts of the Malaysian capital where the largest number of Chin refugees and asylum seekers lived.

Those arrested were taken away in three lorries.

In recent months, the Malaysian government had repeatedly requested the UNHCR to speed up the process for 'undocumented individuals' to return to their countries.

As of January this year, there are 140,590 people from Burma who had applied for amnesty and refugee status in Malaysia, according to the UNHCR statistics.#

Chin refugee couple beaten up in Delhi

27 May 2015 -- A Chin couple living as refugees in Delhi were beaten up while making an attempt to calm down an argument between a neighbour Chin and a local Indian about water.

Thawng Tin Kham and wife Dawt Tin Sung were attacked by two Indian men as they intervened in the argument happening around midnight on 26 May over the water mortar pump shared by flat mates.

Kham reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization that the Indian man and his drunk friend had hit and kicked them several times and that they had been injured in the head, face and neck.

There are nine Chin refugee families and three Indian families living in the building where they share the water pump.

Sung told the CHRO: "Normally, we, all tenants, share the same wa-

ter mortar. Whenever we started the pump, the Indian man turned off our pipeline and let the water flow into his own tank. Yesterday, Thang Bawi turned it on as he couldn't tolerate it any more that night."

The two men, who were drinking alcohol on the top floor, started beating their Chin friend, according to Sung.

"We took our friend into our room. Suddenly, the men broke our door open. They kicked, beat and hit me and my husband. My face and nose were bleeding. Other families who tried to intervene were also beaten by the two Indians. Afterwards, they called the police and reported the incident to them by phone."

The police summoned the couple, accompanied by leaders from the Hakha refugee community, to the police station.

"We were there for about two hours and interrogated at the station. We believe that the Indians

bribed the police. They let them go without any punishment and we were told that they wouldn't be a problem any more," she added.

She said that they had felt sad and helpless when they had gone home around 3am from the police station.

The Chin couple reported the case to the Socio-Legal Information Centre today. However, there has not been any response from the SLIC office.

Sung said: "We were asked by a SLIC officer whether we wanted to log FIR (First Information Report) or not? We decided not to because the SLIC office told us that if we log FIR, we will need to stay in Delhi for many more years and have to pay for transport to go to court on our own. We won't be able to afford it."

Meanwhile, the Indian landlord has warned that the Chin couple must move out of the building by 2 June 2015 and that they would be killed if they didn't manage to do so.#

Chin refugee father attacked, mugged in Delhi

20 May 2015 – A Chin refugee pastor and father of three was attacked and mugged by two Indians in Mahindra Park, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi around 10pm on 15 May 2015.

Rev. Zakiau, a Christian pastor in his late seventies at the Truth Fellowship, lost his mobile phone and 100 rupees to the attackers who ran away immediately after the incident.

He told the Chin Human Rights Organization that he had passed by them, been grabbed from behind and strangled by two local young men while he was on the way home from the church at night.

"I got unconscious and collapsed on the ground.

When woke up after a few minutes, I was all by myself."

He got injuries in his face. He said that he had vomited after the attack. "I felt too tired and dizzy. I managed to get up and reach home around 11pm."

"I reported the case to the Socio Legal Information Centre on 18 May. However, I didn't receive proper responses from them. A SLIC officer told me that the case would be forwarded to the UNHCR office as they had no capacity to deal with the case since the two culprits are unidentified."

Originally from Falam, Chin State, Burma, Rev. Zakiau lives in Delhi with his wife Ngur Than Mawii, sons Lal Zo Muan and Caleb Lal Ro Pui, and daughter Lal Siang Mawi as refugees, all of his children under the age of 20.#

The Chin refugee family evicted in Delhi (Photo: CHRO)



"We owe our landlord a total of 20,300 rupees, which include electricity and water bills. My wife has been suffering from various health complications such as uterus problems, nerve pain and heart attack. At the same time, she is pregnant with a condition that needs proper care, according to the government-run Dada Dev Hospital."

The doctor said that my wife needed a complete rest in order to save the child's life.

Chin refugee family evicted by Indian landlord in Delhi

26 June 2015 -- A Chin refugee family of three including a one-year-old baby has been made homeless in New Delhi, India since 22 June 2015 after being unable to pay the rent for four months.

The Indian landlord locked out the room rented in Chanakya place by Hming Than Tluanga, aged 26, and wife Lal Rin Awmi, 25, with their baby son as they could not afford to make their payments.

Tluanga said: "We try as much as we could to survive as refugees but unfortunately, we could not pay the rent for months because of many problems."

He added: "Because of these problems, I have not been able to work on a regular basis. So, we have basically been wandering looking for cheaper accommodation and our daily meals."

The family eventually approached the Socio-Legal Information Centre, Women Protection Centre and Don Bosco - the implementing partners of the UNHCR - for help. However, they haven't received any assistance so far.

Since the beginning of May, the landlord had warned them to leave their rented room.

Currently, the evicted family is temporarily staying at the office of the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC).#

Other News

House fire kills elderly woman in Hakha township

12 May 2015 -- An elderly woman identified as Sui Bor, 82, was burned to death when her family's house was on fire at about 10pm last Thursday in Sakta, Hakha Township, Chin State.

Pu Hram Cin, Bor's brother-in-law, said in the Hakha Post that it had got very late when the villagers found out about the fire.

"The kitchen was already gone and so was the passage between the kitchen and her bedroom. So, she could not be rescued," he said.

Her grandchildren, a boy and a girl aged between 5

and 7, managed to escape from the house by climbing down the ladder that neighbours had placed against a window, according to reports.

Information about the source of the fire is not known although it was suggested to have started in the kitchen.

According to police, the rest of the family were working on their farm and sleeping over when the incident took place, and it was only the two-storey house that was burnt down.

The police took her body to the Hakha General Hospital for a post-mortem on Friday and it was then returned to her village for burial.#

Shop-owners encouraged to use names in Chin

23 May 2015 -- Chin university students' fellowships are suggesting the use or inclusion of names in Chin dialects for shops, companies and organizations.

The groups said that they would like to request owners and leaders to give a name in a Chin dialect to their business in an effort to preserve the language.

The Hakha University Student's Fellowship said that they had distributed a request letter to 620 local shops and companies that have outlets and offices, mainly along the main road, in the capital of Chin State.

Salai Za Lian Thang, HUSF chairman, said in the *Hakha Post*: "We want them to include a separate Chin name even if they have their shops' names written in English or Burmese. It will be an indication of Hakha being a Chin town and of our support for Chin literature and culture."

Salai John Peng Tha Awr said that the majority of the Hakha residents had welcomed their request, adding: "Some say they would use only a Chin name while others say they would include it as much as possible."

University students' fellowships in Thantlang and Falam are preparing to distribute a similar request letter to local businesses, companies and organizations.

Most of the names of town and village signs across Chin State are written in Burmese, in a movement seen as a step taken by Burma's authorities toward *Burmanization*.

Student leaders indicate that the businesses, companies and organizations will also be encouraged to display a request to the public not to discriminate against establishments that fail to use Chin names.#

Most of the names of
town and village signs
across Chin State are
written in Burmese,
in a movement seen as a
step taken by
Burma's authorities
toward Burmanization.

Burma returns 18 detained Mizos to India

08 June 2015 -- The authorities in Burma have sent back 18 people to their native Mizoram State, India after detaining them in Tamu town of Sagaing Region for more than two months.

They were arrested in Khawzinkai village in Burma on 24 March as they were crossing the border via Manipur State in an attempt to go to China through Burma, according to the Khonumthung news.

Sources said that the group, initially comprising 19 including children and led by Lawmzuali, had started their journey on 15 March from Tlangsam village to bring the Christian gospel to the Chinese.

Zonghinglova, husband of Lawmzuali died in detention in Burma.

With the help of the Tamu Mizo Youth Organization and the Tahan Mizo Youth Organization, officers from the Immigration Department and Police Force took them back to the Indian border town of Zokhawthar on 1 June.#

Media, communities blamed for low voter registration in Chin State

18 June 2015 -- The State Election Commission in Hakha put the blame for low statistics of voter registration in Chin State on local media agencies and community-based organizations.

Lynn Kyaw, a leading member of the Chin State Election Commission, said that they had tried to get accurate data on the number of eligible voters but people hadn't got interested because of little support from local media agencies and CBOs.

He said: "The commission did all from the start to the end. As we didn't get help from the media and local communities, there wasn't enough awareness and interest among the people. However, we will keep on trying to get correct data of the voters."

According to the official statistics posted on 8 June, there are only 262,621 eligible voters registered in Burma's western state.

To this, Kyaw said that it was not a closing list and that there had to be more voters than the current number.

Speaking on condition of anonymity to the Chin Human Rights Organization, a Chin news editor in Hakha said that they were not responsible for the statistics and that the commission had to cooperate more with communities, civil society and media agencies.

Meanwhile, Hakha residents complain that it is very difficult for them to check their names on the list of eligible voters posted in the town.

Salai Thang, from Keisih Ward, said that the Hakha Township list was displayed but it was not properly categorized and that he was not able to find his name.

"I will have to spend hours looking for my name on the list. I don't think people will get interested in the list as it is not well organized. The election commission should have made it easy for people like us to read," added Thang.

Salai Lian, a village leader in Thantlang Township, said that many villagers would not be able to read their names as they are written in Burmese, adding: "The majority of people in our village, for instance, can only read Chin, not Burmese. They are not to be blamed. Why don't the responsible authorities also write in Chin?"

According to the census in March 2014, the population of Chin State is 478,801, with 79 per cent living in rural areas. It also shows that the number of those under the age of 15 are 191,290.#

Immigration, police check passenger ID in Matupi

MATUPI, 29 June 2015 -- The Immigration and Population Department and the Police Force in Matupi, Matupi Township, Chin State checked again identification of passengers travelling by bus in and out of the town, a local told the Chin Human Rights Organization.

Buses plying regularly between Matupi and Mindat and Pakokku were stopped and their passengers were asked to provide IDs by immigration officers, auxiliary fire brigade members and Sabaung Ward administrators under the leadership of the police station commander, according to the local.

A bus driver, who wants to remain anonymous, said: "What they mainly check are vehicle registration num-

ber, name of the station from which the bus starts, driver's name, vehicle's owner, vehicle's license, list of passengers, their names, National Registration Card (ID), address, and parents' names."

When asked about the reason for conducting this activity, the local said: "I don't know exactly but as the general election draws nearer, they are probably taking security measures."

A passenger told the CHRO: "It is good if this is only for security reasons. But passengers are worried. They are worried that this will keep on going like the previous time under the military rule."

It is the first time passengers travelling along the Matupi-Mindat-Pakokku road are checked again since 2010 when the new government was installed in the country. #

Government

UN urge Burma's govt to end impunity

01 May 2015 -- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the government of Burma to put an end to the culture of impunity for sexual violence crimes.

He said that the government should "take practical and timely actions to protect and support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and prosecute 'security personnel accused of such crimes'".

His recent report submitted to the UN Security Council contained an account of how the Burma Army had tried to settle the case of a 10-year-old girl raped in early 2015 by a soldier by offering money to her family.

He said that sexual violence remains widespread in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States, as well as areas subject to ceasefire agreements in Chin State and the south-east of the country.

Burma's government endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June last year.

"Nevertheless, during 2014 there continued to be a high level of impunity for conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by State actors and a lack of transparency in military courts," the report added.

While welcoming the country's democratic transition process, Ban Ki-moon urged the inclusion of 'sexual violence' as an element in all ceasefire and peace negotiations. #

"Nevertheless, during 2014 there continued to be a high level of impunity for conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by State actors and a lack of transparency in military courts,"

Chin State plans to protect women and children

06 May 2015 -- The government of Chin State announced its new plan to provide social services that would benefit children and women in Burma's western state.

The plan, funded by Danida, Danish International Development Agency, and jointly supported by UNICEF and the Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development, aims at helping children and families develop in their daily lives.

A statement released yesterday said that children in Chin State are more likely to be underweight and stunted than their peers living in other parts of the country.

It said that only 6 percent of children in Burma's least developed state were delivered in a health facility.

Bertrand Bainvel, UNICEF representative to Burma, said: "The Local Social Plan addresses unmet development needs and rights, prioritised by the people of Chin State and the Chin State Government, such as food security, improved access to and retention in education, and expanded coverage of quality health services."

The 5-year project, which will start in April next year, will focus on eight sectors including 'social protection and child protection, infrastructure development and transportation development.

Development partners stressed the difficulty of access to Chin State at a forum held in Rangoon yesterday entitled 'The Chin State 5-year Development Plan with Child-Focused Local Social Plan'.

Joern Kristensen, MIID director-cum-founder, said: "There are many challenges in Chin State. It's a state which has the worst social indicators, poverty, malnutrition, and lack of access to education, lack of access to health services. I think this should be the one we prioritize."

Danish Ambassador to Burma H.E. Peter Lysholt Hansen said that the people of Chin State deserved to see tangible results in their daily lives following the ceasefire agreement.

He added that it was part of Denmark's strong support for the peace, democracy, human rights and reform process in the Southeast Asian country. #

Chin peace group reviews govt-CNF agreement implementation

08 May 2015 -- The Chin Peace and Tranquillity Committee held a meeting with the Chin State government and the Chin National Front to re-examine if both parties were abiding by their agreements.

Citing a collection of incidents that were seen as violating the agreements, the CPTC, a ceasefire monitoring group, told the two parties that they had not acted according to what had been agreed.

The CPTC's report, documented between 2013

and 2015, revealed that the State government had violated the agreement ten times and the CNF on four occasions.

It included the CNF holding public consultations outside Chin State in Kalay and Tamu towns, Sagaing Region, and talking about politics to Chin university students.

And the committee also highlighted that Burma Army Light Infantry Battalions No. 266, No. 274 and No. 344 had entered areas occupied by the CNF on several occasions without their knowledge, extorted money from locals and committed rapes.

Representatives of the State government told the

CPTC that it was not their job to document rapes but the Chin State police force's although the two parties welcomed the meeting admitting their mistakes.

It was the first time the CPTC had organized such a meeting since the signing of the ceasefire agreements between the CNF and both the State and Union governments in 2012.

The meeting held on 28 April in Hakha was attended by a six-member delegation led by Minister Colonel Zaw Min Oo, minister of Security and Border Affairs, seven CNF members led by Khua Uk Lian, two observers and three CPTC members, according to the *Chinland Post*.#

State govt building contractor fined for falling behind schedule

08 May 2015 -- The Aroma Rose Company has been fined 100,000 kyats (about \$100) per day since 1 April as it could not finish construction of the Chin State government building as agreed.

A senior State government staff member told the *Chinland Post* that action had been taken according to the initial agreement included in the tender application form.

The company was supposed to complete the construc-

tion in March this year, according to the agreement.

Ko Ye Win Swe, a Burmese engineer at the Aroma Rose, told the newspaper that the reason behind the delay was the climate in Hakha.

He said: "Most of our workers are from a hot region of Rangoon and Nay Pyi Taw. As they could not stand the cold here, they left the job. Therefore, we had to spend much time recruiting new workers. That was the main reason."

Nang Za Mung, State minister of Finance and Revenue, said that the government had informed the company had to complete the work in May.#



Photo : The Hakha Post

The Hakha Post reported that the asphalt covering the road was so thin that it could easily melt as it got hotter in the summer, adding: "It gradually gets eroded as vehicles run on it."

The Chin State government had told the construction department responsible for the road modernization project to hasten road construction work to complete it before the arrival of President Thein Sein to attend the February

20 celebration of Chin National Day.

"We have been well familiar with the nature of the authorities. But this time, as they are known to have been changing, we thought that they would prove their nature to us with quality work. Now, this happens again. What can we say?" a community leader told the Chin Human Rights Organization.

The project included widening and tarring the main road, with residents seeing their verandas destroyed with no compensation. However, some welcomed the new development while others complained.#

Govt dept criticised for bad condition of Hakha road

12 May 2015 -- The Department of Construction in Hakha has been slammed for its work as the main road, completed in late February this year, has already developed bad conditions.

A Hakha resident said that people were shocked to see that the surface of the newly tarred road in the capital of Chin State had started coming off in less than three months.

Corruption blamed for persistence in opium cultivation in Chin State

13 May 2015 -- Corruption has been identified as one of the main factors allowing an increase in the poppy opium plantation in Tonzang Township, Chin State, according to the Public Radio International (PRI).

A PRI news report indicated that government officials in the area were bribed into turning a blind eye to the poppy cultivation in the northern Chin township.

Hen Thang, chairman of the Union Solidarity and Development Party in Tonzang, was quoted by PRI as saying: "The police are paid to keep away from the opium."

"You could walk past them right here in Tonzang with a big lump of opium in your arms and nothing would happen. Last time the police went out to

eradicate the poppy fields, they took bribes from the farmers for ignoring their fields," he added.

He expressed his grave concern over the spread of drug use and opium addiction, especially among men, in the communities.

"On a recent visit to a village I saw how a woman of a household was working away, grounding maize, while her husband lay on the ground, high on opium. I got tears in my eyes. I honestly have no idea how these communities will survive like this," he said.

Early this year, the State government said that it had carried out an eradication activity destroying more than 500 acres of poppy plantations in Tonzang alone.

However, Cin Tung Mang, a Tonzang town council member, said that the destruction had been a lot less than what they had said, adding: "...they only destroyed a few of the nearby fields that are easy to get to," according to the PRI news report.#

Interview

Independent investigation for missing Khumi Chin: Interview with Rachel Fleming

24 June 2015 -- Ling Min, a Khumi Chin from Pyin So village where the Burma Army and the Arakan Army clashed, has since been missing and it is alleged that he might have been abducted. Regarding his disappearance, the *Chinland Guardian* interviews Rachel Fleming, CHRO's Advocacy Director.

Chinland Guardian: Why are the Arakan Army fighting in Chin State?

Rachel Fleming: In a Reuters media interview, General Nyunt Htun Aung, the second in command of the Arakan Army, said that the AA opened up a new Western front as a way of putting pressure on the government to include it among ethnic armed groups engaged in peace talks. [Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/23/us-myanmar-insurgency-idUSKBN0NEI4320150423>] Hardline Arakan nationalists would like to claim Paletwa to be part of Arakan State, even though the majority of the population self-identify as Khumi and Mara Chin.

Chinland Guardian: Aren't these very serious allegations you are making against the Arakan Army?

Rachel Fleming: We have documented evidence of serious human rights abuses committed by both parties to this conflict. The Arakan Army detained Khumi Chin civilians, and ordered them to perform forced labour, including digging a grave and burying the dead body of a Burma Army Captain. At the same time, we also documented human rights violations by the Burma Army in the lead-up to the conflict, including the recruitment of child soldiers and also forced recruitment, which is a form of forced labour. Ordinary Khumi Chin civilians are the ones bearing the brunt of this conflict. - continued onto next page

Chinland Guardian: What happened to Ling Min, who you allege may have been abducted by the Arakan Army?

Rachel Fleming: We don't know exactly, which is why there must be an independent, impartial investigation to determine what happened to him. Circumstantial evidence points to the Arakan Army, as they detained 8 other villagers at the same spot, and ordered other villagers to perform forced labour. Also, the Burma Army soldiers were positioned in the village for the duration of the fighting, in sight of the villagers, so they do not believe that the Burma Army is responsible. If the Arakan Army are holding Ling Min, they should release him immediately. Under international humanitarian law, each party to the conflict must take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing as a result of armed conflict, and to provide their family members with information it has on their fate.

Chinland Guardian: Who should investigate his disappearance?

Rachel Fleming: As a first step, the police should launch a search for Ling Min. There also needs to be an independent, impartial investigation to determine what happened to him. In the first instance, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission should do this, in accordance with best practice guidelines produced by the International Committee of the Red Cross. [Source: Best practice guidelines are outlined by the International Committee for the Red Cross in *The Missing and Their Families: Action to resolve the problem of people unaccounted for as a result of armed conflict or internal violence and to assist their families*, December 2003, ICRC, ref: 03/IC/10] That includes making sure that his family are kept fully informed at every step of the way. They have a right to know what happened to him.

Chinland Guardian: There has been criticism of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission in the past. Are they up to the job of investigating?

Rachel Fleming: We are well aware of the limitations of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, and have called for the enabling legislation to be amended, in order for the Commission to operate independently, impartially, and effectively. However, in this case we believe that an investigation by the MNHRC would be better than one conducted by the Burma Army, as they are a party to the conflict.

Chinland Guardian: What should the Arakan Army do?

Rachel Fleming: As a party to the conflict, the Arakan Army has legal obligations to protect civilians under international humanitarian law. Arbitrary detention, abusive forced labour, and enforced disappearance are expressly prohibited under international humanitarian law. If the Arakan Army are holding Ling Min, they should release him immediately. The AA should investigate these alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice in open civilian court, regardless of rank or position. We are also calling on the AA to sign and implement the Geneva Call deeds of commitment, including banning the use of anti-personnel landmines.

Note: The other deeds of commitment cover protecting children in armed conflict, and prohibiting sexual violence and gender discrimination.

Chinland Guardian: Has the government of Chin State taken any action regarding the conflict, and help for the victims?

Rachel Fleming: Chin State Minister for Forestry and Mining U Kyaw Nyein delivered 4 million kyats in assistance to the IDPs, but that has run out already. U Kyaw Nyein promised the IDPs that the State government will take action to help them go back peacefully. But to date, nothing has been done to ensure the IDPs' safety. Kyaw Nyein urged the IDPs to return to Pyin So soon. The IDPs have also faced pressure to return from Paletwa Township Administration Officer Han Win Aung. He told the IDPs, "If you don't go back very soon, your villages will be expelled from Kyway village tract and you will have problems regarding your National Registration Cards and family registration documents under the department of home affairs and immigration." He warned the villagers that would be a particular problem for them, in light of the upcoming elections. Such threats and pressure breaches international standards on the treatment of displaced persons, including those provided by the UN Guiding Principles on Internal

Displacement.

Chinland Guardian: Ling Min's family as well as the villagers must be deeply affected by his disappearance.

Rachel Fleming: Ling Min's disappearance has caused huge anguish to his family and to the Pyin So community as a whole. We are calling on the police to launch a search for him. There also needs to be an independent, impartial investigation to determine what happened to him, and his family must be kept fully informed at every step of the way. They have a right to know what happened to him. Those responsible must also be held accountable.

Another practical way we can help the family and the community as a whole is to support them with their immediate and longer-term needs. They need food, medical care, and medicines. In the longer term the IDPs are very concerned about their children's education and have already started to construct a school out of bamboo in the IDP camp. But they have no teachers.##

Statement

Monday 15 June 2015
PRESS RELEASE: for immediate release

Caught in the crossfire: Chin civilians bear brunt of conflict in Paletwa, Chin State

[Chiang Mai, Thailand] The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) today condemned both the Arakan Army (AA) and the Burma Army for human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, in the context of recent outbreaks of conflict between the two sides in Paletwa, southern Chin State.

CHRO urged the authorities to cooperate with UN agencies and the international community to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance to more than 350 Khumi Chin internally-displaced persons (IDPs), who will run out of food supplies before the end of this month.

CHRO's briefing published today describes how the community of Khumi Chin indigenous people were forced to flee when their village of Pyin So – where there is a Burma Army military outpost - came under direct attack by the Arakan Army at the end of March.

Around 6pm on 28 March, about 40 armed soldiers from non-ceasefire ethnic armed group the Arakan Army approached the village. On their way to the village they detained 8 Khumi Chin men, two of whom managed to escape and were able to warn the villagers of the impending attack. The eight Burma Army soldiers stationed there left their outpost and took up positions around the village. Fighting broke out late that night, and again early the next morning, and Burma Army Captain Kyaw Htet Aung was killed. After the Arakan Army effectively seized control of the village, they ordered the Pyin So villagers to dig a grave and bury the body of the Captain. Another ten men were forcibly taken by the Arakan Army to porter their loads for them to the border with Bangladesh.

The primary school in the village was destroyed in the fighting, as well as the school teacher's hostel and two other homes. The roofs were heavily damaged and the properties are riddled with bullet holes. Both the Burma Army and the Arakan Army have allegedly laid landmines around Pyin So village.

In the lead-up to the outbreak of conflict, CHRO also documented two cases of child soldier recruitment and one of forced recruitment by the Burma Army in the Paletwa area, and locals reported an increase in troop movement.

“This is yet another case where ordinary civilians, this time Khumi Chin indigenous people, bear the brunt of armed conflict in Burma and suffer human rights violations,” said Rachel Fleming, CHRO’s Advocacy Director. “The long-standing pattern of abuses hasn’t stopped; in fact we see it escalating in the Paletwa area.”

Alleged abduction

On the evening of 28 March, Ling Min aka Leing Mang in the Khumi Chin language), a 30 yearold father of two from Pyin So village, left home at around 5pm to go out hunting. His usual hunting spot was near a fruit-bearing tree which attracted animals, in the same area where the other Pyin So men were detained by the Arakan Army later that evening. Ling Min did not return home that night and has not been seen since. Based on the fact that Ling Min was hunting in the area close to where the other men were detained by the AA, CHRO believes that he has either been abducted by the Arakan Army to serve as a guide or porter, or may have been killed by the AA.

All armed forces involved in an armed conflict, including non-state armed groups such as the Arakan Army, must abide by the rules of international humanitarian law. Arbitrary detention, abusive forced labour, and enforced disappearance are expressly prohibited under international humanitarian law. If the Arakan Army are holding Ling Min, they must release him immediately.

“Ling Min’s disappearance has caused huge anguish to his family and to the Pyin So community as a whole. We are calling on the police to launch a search for him,” said Rachel Fleming. “There also needs to be an independent, impartial investigation to determine what happened to him, and his family must be kept fully informed at every step of the way. Those responsible must be held accountable.”

End pressure to return

CHRO’s briefing highlights how the IDPs have come under considerable pressure to return to Pyin So village by the local Burma Army Tactical Commander, Chin State Minister for Forestry and Mining, and Paletwa Township Administrator, even though landmines have reportedly been laid in the area.

“The pressure from the authorities to return home violates the rights of the IDPs,” said Fleming. “Instead, the authorities should be consulting with them for long-term solutions, in accordance with the right to free, prior and informed consent. Voluntary return in safety and dignity is a right, not an obligation. And in this case it would require humanitarian landmine clearance and security guarantees from the authorities.”

The 350 IDPs – of whom 141 are children - urgently need food, medical care and medicine, additional latrines, and construction materials.

-ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. According to information provided by [Myanmar Peace Monitor](http://www.myanmarpeacemonitor.org), there are two factions of the Arakan Army. One is based in Karen State, and the other has been based primarily in Kachin State, allied with the

Kachin Independence Organization. They have the same stated aims but operate separately. The AA faction in Kachin State has been fighting alongside the KIA in Kachin State. 8 of their cadets were killed in the Burma Army shelling of the KIA training school last November. In February, that faction of the AA joined forces with the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Kokang non-state armed group the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), in northern Shan State. This AA faction numbers some 2,000 troops, and opened up a new front in the west of Burma, in Arakan and Chin States in March and April 2015. Hard-line Arakan nationalists would like to claim Paletwa to be part of Arakan State, even though the majority of the population self-identify as Khumi and Mara Chin. Paletwa is primarily accessible from Arakan State, due to poor infrastructure in Chin State.

2. Please see the briefing for legal analysis and the full list of recommendations made by CHRO.

3. For high-resolution images of the IDP camp, please email info@chro.ca

Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)

www.chro.ca

2-Montavista Avenue, Nepean, K2J 2L3, Canada
Ph: 1-613-843-9484; Email: info@chro.ca