

Displacement and causes of displacement in Chin State

Documents

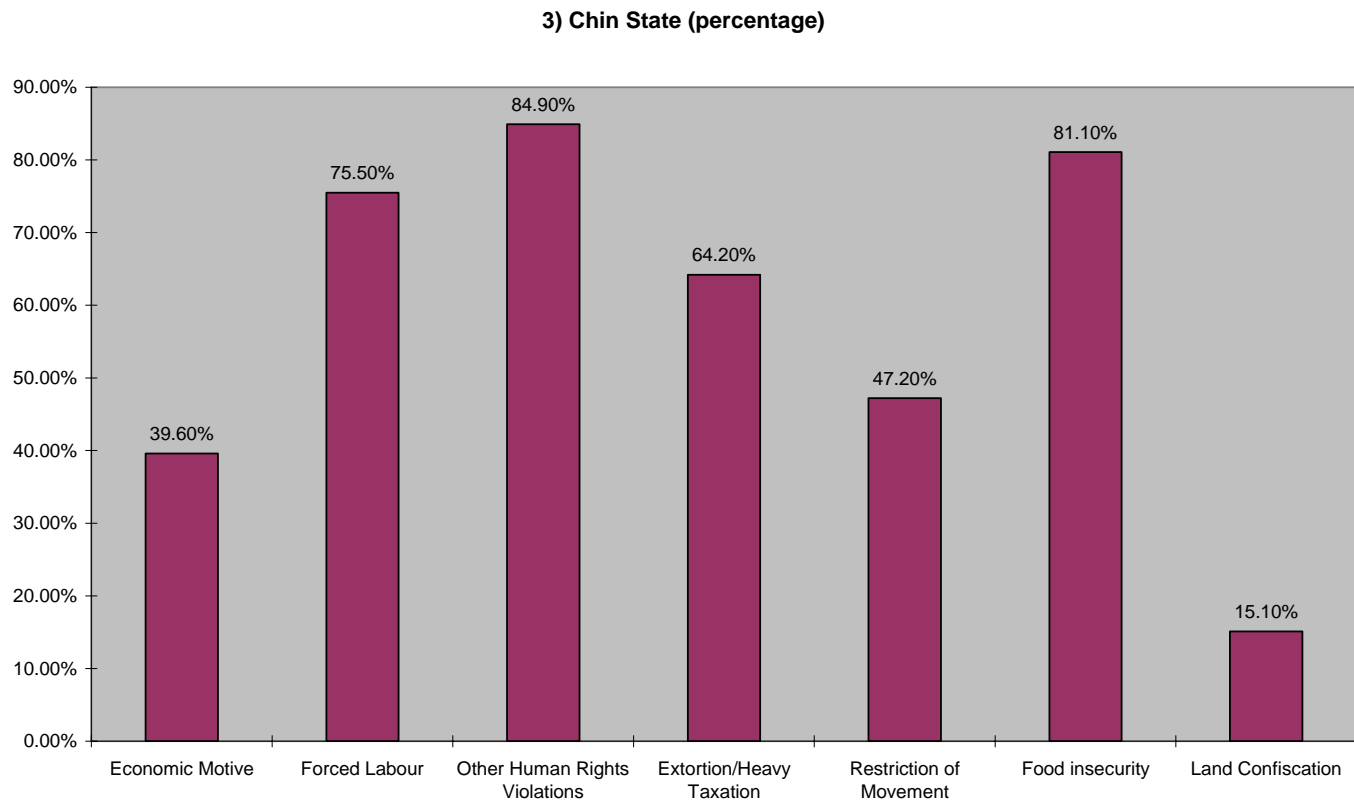
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Survey results (53 respondents)



Forced relocation/eviction (rural)

Shame of the Forgotten Refugees

-- Tamara Terziana, *The Irrawaddy*, April 2007

The morning air is crisp and smells of wood fire. Up on the mountain crests, fog sits like snow in a fairy tale. People wrap themselves in clouds of tobacco smoke, puffing

leisurely while sitting on their heels. Women carry their babies wrapped in colorful fabrics slung on their backs.

Mizoram's capital, Aizawl, clings like an eagle's nest to a mountain peak, where houses lean partly on stilts and partly on the hillside.

It's a town where the local Mizo population and Chin from Burma go about their daily chores side by side.

Tens of thousands of Chin live in Mizoram illegally, slipping easily through a long, porous border. **They cross over to earn money to send back home, or to escape poverty or persecution by the Burmese military.**

But without legal status and proper permits, the Chin usually get the lowest-paid jobs, in road and construction work, markets, restaurants or as domestics. As porters they carry produce to the market in huge cone-shaped baskets fixed by straps to their foreheads. Others sell goods spread out on the ground.

The Chin lacking proper documentation generally face deportation if they are arrested by police and cannot afford the usual bribe of 200 to 500 rupees (US \$4.50 to \$11). Weavers among the Chin tend to fare better. They are skilled laborers in an important sector of the local economy, and this usually spares them harassment.

Pari, 37, is one of the lucky ones. "I arrived in 1997 from a Chin village in Sagaing Division," she said. "Two of my six children are still back in Burma, and I support them with my work."

Mizoram is now classified as a peaceful state within India, while protracted conflicts continue in other parts of the isolated northeast, which have high concentrations of Indian military and paramilitary forces, police and intelligence agencies.

Following the independence struggle of the Mizo National Front, the 1987 peace agreement granted Mizoram the status of a state within the Indian federal system with its own government and police—something along the lines of what ethnic groups such as the Chin would like to see happen in Burma. The Indian government has channelled modest investment into Mizoram. But the Mizos, in spite of being ethnic kin and somewhat sympathetic to the Chin, try to protect the little they have from outsiders.

Dr Walter Fernandez of the Guwahati-based Northeastern Social Research Centre in India says the lack of development amplifies the Mizos' fear of outsiders attaining economic, political or social power. According to a leading Mizo activist, discrimination against Burmese prevails because they are associated with HIV/AIDS, drugs and crime.

From Aizawl, a day-long journey to the border between Mizoram and Burma winds through magnificent, lush green mountains. How easily this state's tourism potential could be developed to benefit everyone, but along the roadside Chin live in shacks and eke out a living by breaking stones.

Pu Thang, a thin man in his 40s and covered in dust, said that he and his wife get 150 rupees (\$3.40) for filling 15 baskets in a 10-hour working day. “Our children help us and cannot go to school, but anyway we have no extra money for schooling,” he said.

Next to their hut, red chillies dry in the sun and colorful clothes flutter in the wind. But what could look picturesque to passing tourists is merely an expression of the poverty of a marginalized population in an underdeveloped part of India.

The border town of Zokhawthar illustrates real poverty and a lack of education. The town’s refugee-run, Western-sponsored clinic is short of medicine and has no trained doctor, but it still manages to care for more than 2,000 outpatients a year free of charge. “We would welcome the help of local and international NGOs,” said the clinic’s manager, “but they never come here.”

Special 10-day permits are required for both Indian and international NGO workers, diplomats and even tourists. In a mountainous region with poor transport infrastructure, this is barely sufficient time for NGO workers to assess community needs.

Crossing the border is easy, provided fees are paid to the military on both sides. When I was there, a long line of Burmese carrying their belongings on their backs queued to return to Burma. But while some Burmese migrate between the two countries easily, others cannot go back and need to pay off the police in Mizoram in order to stay.

Nute, a young, gaunt-looking woman, is one of those stranded. **“I crossed over to get treatment for my baby. Now I cannot return because my village was burnt down and people are fleeing.”**

According to human rights activists in New Delhi, the Indian public and central politicians see Burma and Burmese refugees as part of the general malaise of the northeastern region. However, Indian military leaders are acutely aware of security threats stemming from the border.

These concerns, combined with strategic and economic interests, have led to New Delhi’s so-called “Look East Policy.”

To this end, the Indian federal government has announced plans to spend about \$100 million improving navigation of the Kaladan River, which flows from southern Mizoram into Burma and out into the Bay of Bengal at the Sittwe port in Arakan State.

India also wants to modernize the Sittwe port, and says agreement has been reached on this with the Burmese regime. New Delhi says the Kaladan could become an important trade route giving Mizoram and other northeast states access to the sea.

In the meantime, the Chin community tries to help itself. Throughout Mizoram, small groups have been set up to fund the schooling of the poorest children, as well as to provide health care and safe houses for women. Some of their leaders are educated Chin who benefited from a recruitment drive by the Mizoram authorities in the 1990s to deal with the Chin problem.

Pa Lian, a native Chin teacher, community leader and health worker, said: “We all received training, legal papers and jobs.”

But Pa Lian’s team, which helps in providing housing for Chin often finds it difficult to operate. “To rent a house, a Chin needs two recommendation letters issued by the village council and the Young Mizo Association (see box story),” says Pa Lian. “In practice, this is very difficult and again people are threatened with deportation.”

It’s not clear how many Chin live in Mizoram. Hngaki, a Chin activist, said there is a tendency by Chin to give low figures to avoid raising fears among the Mizos.

“The visible population of Chins who identify themselves by speaking and dressing like Chin and attending Chin church fellowships accounts for over 60,000,” she said. But many other Chin have adopted Mizo customs and language for survival and to avoid discrimination.

“Our existence as Burmese here in northeast India has been ignored by the international community, neglected by the pro-democracy movement and downplayed by Indian officials,” said Hngaki, in an appeal for help

...

*All Chin names in this article have been changed

Oppression in Chin state force people to abandon homeland

-- *Khonumthung News*, 21 February, 2007

About 50,000 Chin people have abandoned their homeland and taken refuge in foreign countries in the past year to escape unabated oppression by a brutal military regime in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma.

The army is still forcing people from Chin state to work on road and army camp construction, carrying army rations without paying them and confiscating land in Chin state. As a result, people started to flee their homeland, said a source from the government department in Chin state.

Besides, the economic crisis a result of mismanagement by the military rulers have made people struggle for their livelihood. This has also contributed to their leaving Chin state.

A survey in 2006 showed the population of Chin state to be around 538,000. But the figure in Chin state has come down to 479,000, according to records in January 2007.

A government employees from Hakha Township, capital of Chin state said that the percentage of people who have died is marginal in the record. The figures show that most have migrated to foreign countries and other states in Burma.

"There are no other options for a career except farming in Chin state. Now, forced labour and recruitment of child soldiers is the main occupation of Chin people. In a condition like this nobody wants to stay in Chin state," he added.

Sources from Chin state stressed that educated persons are not able to get a good job while relatives of military personnel get privileges and well paid jobs.

"There is no development at all in Chin state," he added.

Chin people, on a daily basis, are facing not only forced labour but also extortion and have to pay high taxes for house construction and agricultural production.

Chin people who left their homeland due to oppression by the junta are taking shelter in neighboring countries such as India, Thailand, Malaysia and have been resettled to third countries like USA, Canada, Australia, Sweden, and Denmark among others under UNHCR's resettlement programme.

After the military regime grabbed power in 1988, the junta began a crack down on Chin pro-democracy activists and expanded military presence in Chin state resulting in forced labour and human rights abuses.

Villagers to relocate within deadline

-- *Kaladan News*, 13 November 2006, via *Rhododendron News*, November-December 2006:

The military regime has ordered several villagers from Chin state in Burma to meet the deadline for relocating to a new site.

U Laito, chairman of the Thang Tlang Township Development and Peace Council (TDPC) office in Chin state on September 5 directed residents of Tluangram village in Thang Tlang Township to complete shifting to the new site, two miles from the present location, where villages are being relocated by December.

I don't want to stay at the new place. Instead, I would rather move to a nearby village or Mizoram state of India," a villager from Tluangram village told Khonumthung.

According a villager, scarcity of water and the bad location of the new villages are the main barriers to moving to the new site.

It is also learnt that TDPC authorities issued the latest instruction because 57 households have stayed back flouting the previous order by the military. About 22 households have relocated to the new place from village in Than Tlang Township in February.

“The 22 households are facing short of water. If we move to that place, the situation will worsen. Only a few people want to move. They are forcibly pushing us to move while the majority are refusing to move,” said villager who has not shifted.

A villager said, “Some people are trying to bribe the authorities so that they are not forced to move but eventually, it will be in vain. The authorities are firm and claim the relocation is based on referendum. The majority in the village are of the opinion that the relocation is absolutely wrong”.

The authorities reportedly want to take action against the disobedient people who are staying in the present location. They will not be allowed stay there anymore. The villages have to find an alternative for a new home.

As a result of the controversy between the authorities and the local people regarding relocation, a primary school in Tlaunram village has been shut down for four months. Moreover, some villagers have been stopped from going to work.

According to a religious leader from Chin state, those who are unwilling to move are very likely to move to Mizoram or some where else.

Tluangram village has been home to people for hundreds of years.

The move to shift Tlaungram village began after the military rulers grabbed power in 1988.

Meeting with village headmen

-- Unpublished report by a research assistant in November 2006)

“During my recent trip to Mizoram State, India, I had the honor of meeting eight village headmen who had recently come from various areas of Chin State in order to attend a workshop in Mizoram. During the meeting, they reported that large numbers of Chin villagers are leaving their villages due to certain SPDC economic policies. In particular forced crop plantings and exorbitant taxation are depriving villagers of a livelihood and hindering their ability to survive. Below is a breakdown of the amount of displacement within the last year in each village along with the root causes of this displacement as reported by the village headmen.

1. AAA Village, Thantlang Township

Displacement: In the past year, out of a total of 250 households, 4 households have left to Malaysia and about 50 or more have come to Mizoram.

Root Causes: SPDC has issued orders to that the village must provide 1200 planks of wood. Failure to provide the demanded amount will result in a fine of 80,000 Kyat. Furthermore, each household is required to dedicate 1 acre of their land to castor oil plants for the SPDC. On the acre, the villagers must produce at least 300 live plants.

2. BBB Village, Falam Township

Displacement: 13 households have left during the past year. There remain only 7 households.

Root Causes: In the past year, the SPDC has ordered villagers to plant castor oil on their land. Furthermore a demand for forced laborers has increased.

3. CCC Village, Thantlang Township

Displacement: 4 households out of a total of 80 have left during the past year.

4. Paletwa Township

Displacement: More than 200 households have left during the past two years.

Root causes: Survival is difficult because of forced labor and economic policies.

5. DDD Village, Thantlang Township

Displacement: Out of 90 households, about 12-15 households have left to Malaysia and Mizoram.

Root causes: SPDC charges heavy taxes to farmers and forces farmers to give up part of their land to certain crops.

6. EEE Village, Thantlang Township

Displacement: 3 households out of 50 have left during the past year.

Root causes: Crop policies and taxation as well as forced labor demands have forced villagers to leave.

7. FFF Village, Hakha Township

Displacement: There use to be 240 households. Now only 124 remain.

Root causes: Many leave to avoid forced labor. In the past year, the village was ordered to work on building a prison labor camp.”

Village headman house and huts of villagers burned down by SPDC

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

28 July 2006: Sergeant Mya Maung and troops of LIB 550 based in Pon-na Island, Arakan State stationed in Marane-wa Village, Paletwa Township, Southern Chin State, burned down the house of Hen Ngaih, Sap-Chain Village headman, on June 26, 2006 accusing him of not reporting the presence of Chin National Army soldiers in the village. In addition, they also destroyed all the village farm huts. The incident was reported to CHRO by the village chairman who escaped.

The village headman was summoned by Commander Tun Tun Aung of LIB 550 based in Tu Rah Aing Village to explain the presence of the Chin National Army soldiers in the village. The village headman Hen Ngaih sent Phoe Kyaw to report the incident to Commander Tun Tun Aung with two chickens, four kilos of rice, a bottle of cooking oil, and a packet of cigars to please the soldiers. However, the Commander was not satisfied and threatened the village headman to be arrested. Fearing for his safety, the village headman fled to Pauk Toe Wa Village on June 18, 2006.

A few days after the headman fled, Sergeant Mya Maung and seven soldiers from Ma Rane Wa Battalion went to the village and threatened the villagers. They ordered the villagers to burn down the house of the chairman. They also took over the village headman's possessions and properties. At the same time, they issued an order prohibiting villagers in most of the upper villages of Paletwa Township from sleeping overnight at their farms. The farm huts were burned down because the villagers were accused of storing rations for armed groups in the huts.

After hearing of the events, Hen Ngaih fled to safe place at India border on July 3, 2006.

Fifty households to be evicted for monastery expansion

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

In yet another instance of brute oppression, the military junta is set to deprive 50 households of their land for the expansion of a monastery in the northwest capital of Chin State in Myanmar.

According to local people, the commander of Tactical (1) Colonel Tin Hla directed the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) in July to acquire houses in the heart of Hakha, Chin State near the monastery. Even though the authorities are yet to inform to people regarding where to shift and how, the land owners and heads of the local community facing eviction met the Commander of Tactical (1) on August 16, seeking that he reconsider his decision.

The military authorities intend to drive away the owners of the houses situated on the upper road of the highway from Hakha to Kan Gaw.

The authorities built the Buddhist monastery at a place which is very crowded and a market area about 45 years ago. Now they are planning to take over five concrete buildings and small houses.

“The authorities will take over some of the houses and the land which are vacant in the town. But they will never pay compensation or provide some relief in terms of money to the owners” said a local in Hakha.

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) started construction of Buddhist pagodas and monasteries around Chin state and at the same time they deprived local people of land and homes.

SPDC soldiers burn a house

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

12 July 2006. The Company Commander from Light Infantry Battalion 550, based in Maringwa Village, Paletwa Township, Southern Chin State, burned down the house of anti-government organization Chin National Front CNF member, the relatives of the family who live near the border reported to CHRO.

The Company Commander along with his troops went to Saih Sin Village to arrest the family of Khin Soe, who has been serving in the Chin National Front since June 2006. Khin Soe's father heard that the news that the troops were coming to arrest him and thus ran to another village.

Aung Linzo, the 20 year old brother of Khin Soe, was arrested by soldiers at Rakei Village while he was retuning from Paletwa. The Burmese soldier said that they arrested him because he had left the village without permission. Aung Linzo did not know that his family was targeted by the Burmese army and they were in danger. Aung Linzo was kept by the Burmese soldiers in Tharuan jail. While he was in jail, he got into a fight with the policeman who was guarding him. Aung Linzo took the officer's gun and escaped on June 18, 2006. He disposed of the gun and ran to Tuidang, Mizoram on June 23, 2006. Thereafter, the SPDC came to Saih Sin Village and burned down the house of Aung Linzo, the CNF member.

Eviction order served to residents of Tamu-Kalay Highway

-- *Kukiform News via Rhododendron News*, March-April 2004

Tamu (Burma), March 14: In yet another unwelcome development in Tamu Township of Upper Sagaing Division in Burma (Myanmar), the local authority of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) issued an order to residents of Tamu-Kalay Highway to vacate their buildings within the month of March. The order was intimated in the first week of March on the pretext of extending the highway to an area of 100 feet on both sides. An extension of 50 feet was already implemented 3 years ago.

"It is planned intentionally to hurt the populace sentiments and is a direct encroachment to our legitimate land by the authority," said a resident over the phone to Kukiform News Service. The move is an attempt to evict us who have owned the plots for years, said another resident on condition of anonymity. The authority neither makes an alternative arrangement to rehabilitate the residents nor offer any kind of compensation in this regard. However, neither the informant nor the Kukiform confirm whether the plan is initiated from Rangoon or is a discretionary order of the local authority.

If the order is carried out as served, millions worth of properties will be demolished without any compensation. Among others, it will include Seventh-Day Adventist Church building, Kuki Chin Baptist Association (KCBA) and Kabaw Valley Thadou Baptist Association (KVTBA) run Bible institution, and other highly priced buildings. It is an area dominated by the Kuki ethnic population and the authority is planning to wipe out the well-to-do families of the Kukis, lamented a resident.

It may be recalled that during the time of the Revolutionary Council government in 1967, the so-called infamous "Khadawmi Operation" was launched to evict thousands of Kukis from Kangmang Phaicham (Kabaw Valley). Tamu is a parliamentary constituency in which U Thong Kho Thang, a Kuki MP from United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD) and who is a spokesperson for the party, was elected during the 1990 general elections in Burma.

Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christians in Burma

-- Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), February 2004

"Internal displacement in Chin State":

"Internal displacement continued to be a significant problem in Chin State throughout 2004. Of an estimated total population of two million, the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) approximates that 60,000 Chin are taking refugee in neighboring countries and that several thousands of Chin remain internally displaced within Burma. There are several Chin tribes in Chin State, including Asho, Cho, Khumi, Kuki, Laimi,

Lushai and Zomi. Conversion to Christianity has been widespread within Chin State in the past century and it is estimated that 90% of Chin are Christian.”

[...]

“Chin refugees in neighbouring countries”

“Today, Burma continues to be ruled by the military (the junta renamed itself the State Peace and Development Council or SPDC in 1997) and the Chin, along with other opponents of the regime, continue to face a multitude of human rights violations. Under Burma's military regime, the Chin are not only facing gross human rights violations, but they are also losing their culture, literature, customs, and traditions. This situation has resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis, both inside and outside the country. It is estimated that at least about 60,000 Chin refugees are taking refuge in neighboring countries and many more thousands are internally displaced in Burma.

Alternative link:

http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/Burma%20Yearbook%202004/HTML%20Peages/Internally_Displaced_People_and_Forced_Relocation.htm

Forced relocation/eviction (urban)

New Township Development Project Left 100 People Forced to Work Daily: 180 houses to be Relocated

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2002

The State Peace and Development Council SPDC in Chin State is using forced labor to build a new high school in Ruazua town of central Chinland as part of state-sponsored development program for the new township headquarters, according to CHRO source. About 100 people are compelled to provide unpaid labor on a daily basis to dig an area of one square mile ground where the foundation for the new high school will be laid. The forced labor began in mid May 2002.

In a related incident, **about 180 houses are to be relocated to give way for a new army camp to be set up in the area. The SPDC authority issued an order affecting the relocation of the houses.**

Located between two major towns, Matupi and Thantlang in central Chin state, Ruazua village became the tenth township headquarters in Chin State in 2002. The application for the township status was made since 1988 so that Ruazua could enjoy government facilities such as high school, hospital etc. "The village had put enormous efforts to meet the criteria for township status and tried very hard to convince the authority by constructing road, water supply, self-support high school etc., all without State support."

According to the local people, they spent about 2 million Kyats to convince the authority and to acquire the status.

However, as soon as Ruazua was awarded township status in 2002, about 100 houses from Old Village Block were ordered to relocate at areas designated by the army so that the Burmese army could build a new army battalion headquarters on the sites. 80 more houses have to vacate their house to allow road extension between the would-be army headquarters and the town.

The SPDC is unlikely, as in all other similar circumstances, to compensate those who are subject to forced labor and relocation, and as a result the affected people may face serious crises.

Punishment for non-compliance with orders

Cultivate Jatopha plant or leave the village

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

January 9, 2007: Chairman of Tedim townships Peace and Development Council told all members of Block Peace and Development Council in a monthly meeting saying that villagers must cultivate Jatopha plant or they have to leave the village.

In November 2006 meeting the chairman gave order every village in the township to plant jatopha, a tree that will produce bio-diesel, before the end of December. Any one who do not cultivate accordance with the order must be driven out from the village, a local villager reported to CHRO.

During the meeting, the chairman instructed villager to plant one acre per house household with fences. The order is compulsory for the villagers to comply and the villagers have to buy the seeds from Township Peace and Development Council office, at the rate of 3,000/- Kyats per kilogram, added the local villager.

In November, authority from townships Peace and Development Council from Zingpi village collected 1,800/- kyats per family to buy Jett-Suu seeds. The remaining sum will be collected again in the coming month.

According to the local man the villagers from the Tedim area are afraid that the authority will drive them out from the village as they can not grow Jatopha due to lack of money to buy the seeds and several other problems they are dealing with their daily lives.

Death sentence to people opposing Jathropa plantation

-- *Khonumthung News* 12 July 2006 via *BurmaNet News*, 26 July 2006

The Burmese military authorities have warned people that it would award the death sentence to anyone who speaks about the drawbacks of Jathropa plantations in Chin state.

In the first week of July, the Tactical I commander of Chin state, Colonel Tin Hlah warned about awarding the death sentence to people critical of Jathropa plantations. The commander of Tactical I in Hakha, the capital of Chin state issued this warning during his official visit to Thantlang.

Col. Tin Hlah cautioned the people during a government inter-departmental meeting during his visit. The Colonel reportedly does not entertain any talk about the plantation's success or failure.

A Thantlang villager told Khonumthung, "The officer regards a Jathropa tree more precious than human life."

Jathropa has been forcibly planted by confiscation of land, five miles from Thantlang town since 2005. The people are forced to work in this plantation at least three times a week, sources in Thantlang added.

A farmer said, "June, July and August are hectic months for people working in the fields. The authorities force us to work in the Jathropa plantations even during these months. Nobody dares to oppose forced labour."

Meanwhile, some people opined that it is because the State Peace and Development Council wants all the people to work in the plantations that they have warned of awarding the death sentence to those against it.

This is the first ever death warrant to the people against the plantation of Jathropa in Chinland.

Burmese Troops Extort Money from Villagers

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2005

Aizawl: Company commander 2nd Lt. Aung Kyaw Than from Light Infantry Battalion 268 (based in Falam) is demanding Kyats 5,000 from each village in the vicinity of Vuangtu village of Thantlang township. The officer is commanding in charge of an army camp based out of Vuangtu village and the money was meant to pay for renovation of his camp.

The order came into effect on August 4, 2005 and 11 villages were required to bring in the money by August 15. **These villages were warned of severe punishment if they failed to come up with the money by the deadline.** Some villages had to borrow the required cash from well-to-do businessmen in their community, while others simply divided up the required amount among all the households in their villages. Some villages are having a hard time coming up with the money and are yet to send in the money, said Chairman of the Village Peace and Development Council from XXX village, whose community was affected by the army officer's order.

Money was extorted from the following villages of Thantlang Township, northern Chin State: Tluangram (A), Tluangram (B), Belhar, Lulpilung, Vomkua, Salen, Tikir (A), Tikir (B), Hmun Halh, Sialam and Banawh Tlang villages.

Villagers Forced to Renovate Army Camp

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2005

Aizawl: Platoon Commander 2nd Lieutenant Win Zaw Oo from Light Infantry Battalion 289 based in the town of Paletwa in southern Chin State exacted forced labor from civilians living in an around Shinletwa village to renovate army camp stationed at the village. The work started on 16 July, 2005 and lasted until 19 July.

90 civilians from Salanpi, Saiha and Ma U villages were ordered to report themselves at the army camp one day prior to the day the work was to begin. All the forced laborers were ordered to bring with them their own tools and enough rations for five days. Workers were made to gather twigs and round bamboos needed to fence the army camp.

Lt. Win Zaw Oo, in his requisition warned **severe punishment for non-compliance with the order.**

Other threats to human security

Land confiscation

Land confiscated for Buddhist Monastery

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

25 July 2006: The military junta in Burma has confiscated land for the construction of a Buddhist monastery in Chin state bordering Sagaing Division.

About 13 acres of land (40 blocks) was confiscated in Tedim Township, Chin state bordering Kalay Myo Town, Sagaing Division for the construction of a Buddhist monastery-cum-orphanage. The confiscated land is situated in Chin state's Khai Kam border village and is also called Koe Mai or Tai Kua, and is nine miles from Kalay Myo town. The military government issued an order for confiscation of the land and construction of the monastery-cum-orphanage in January 2006, in keeping with the wishes of the Buddhist Mission. No compensation was paid to the owners of the land, our sources in Kalay Myo said. A land owner told Khonumthung, "My family is not the only

one losing land, however, I feel bad as it is an extension of Buddhist land.” The monastery-cum-orphanage will be built under the patronage of Colonel Aung Myo Myint.

The land confiscated is adjacent to Kalay University, in Chin state. Different kinds of education are imparted in the monastery-cum-orphanage in accordance with Buddhist teachings. Various Chin orphans have been reportedly admitted to this monastery-cum-orphanage. Many Chin youths have also reportedly sought work in the monastery-cum-orphanage. The orphans and workers of the monastery-cum-orphanage have to convert to Buddhism prior to admission to the institution.

Land confiscation continues for Jathropas plantation

-- *Khonumthung News* via *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

12 August 2006: In an all out bid to transform Chin state to a bio-gas producing state, the military junta continues to confiscate farmland to convert it to jathropas plantations. According to late reports Mr. Zaw Win Htay, Falam Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) Chairman, confiscated farmland (jhum) in Lungrang and Lungpi villages of Falam Township, Chin state, Burma in the second week of July. The confiscated land was estimated to be around 80 acres, situated in the Indo-Burma trade route between Falam and Rih towns. Some areas of the farmland were reportedly confiscated for tea plantation and Jathropas will be collectively planted in the confiscated land. This farmland was reserved for the villagers for Jhum cultivation, sources said. "We are not sure whether to stay or migrate. We will not be able to survive without food if the authorities force us to stop farming. We might be forced to migrate," a villager said. The Indo-Burma trade route passes through Lungrang and Lungpi villages and Lungpi-Gangaw highway was initiated by SPDC. The Lungrang and Lungpi village areas have been reportedly proclaimed as 'Special Area Zone' by the Burmese authorities. The authorities confiscated eight acres of farmland belonging to Pastor Rev. Khup Hlei Thang, Bomba village, Falam Township in May. It is common in Chin state for the authorities to confiscate farmland of the people for tea and Jathropas plantations without paying a Kyat in compensation.

Lands Confiscated to Build Military Base

-- *Rhododendron News*, September-October 2003

“20 August 2003: The expansion of two new Burmese army battalions in Chin State is taking a heavy toll on the local populations. Commander of infantry battalion based in the southern Chin State town of Mindat, has ordered confiscation of nearly 1000 acres of land from residents of Matupi town. The confiscated lands will be used to build bases for Light Infantry Battalions 104 and 105, which have recently been deployed in the area.

The order to confiscate lands took effect on June 20, 2003.

To carry out the task of building the new army bases, members of the Village Peace and Development Council have been assigned different responsibilities, according to a local man whose land was also confiscated by the authorities.

The land confiscation has affected the livelihood of about 80 households whose primary means of survival depend on cultivating the confiscated lands. Military authorities are not giving any compensation to the affected households. The confiscated lands represent the very backbone of the economy of this relatively self-sufficient town of Matupi. The lands had been used for horticulture, fish and cattle farming.

The new army bases will now encompass 550 acres of horticultural land and about 200 acres of lands of fish and cattle farms and grazing areas.”

Land Confiscation

-- *Rhododendron News*, August 1999

According to CHRO field monitor, 6000 acres cultivatable land in Chin State, managed by Haikhawl village (Haikhawl is a Chin Village in Sagaing Division and the land is inside Chin State) was confiscated by the Burmese military in 1997. And now the villagers are paying a very high price Kyats 50,000/- per house hold to get back their land. There are more than 200 house hold in Haikhawl village.

In 1992- 93, the then SLORC was logging in the junction of Chin State and Sagaing Division. Thus all the teak(forest) reserves in the area were cleared, mostly inside Chin State. After the forest was cleared cut, the authority tried to re-plant trees in the area. However the plan was not successful due to corruption, and after making efforts for two three times they gave up the plan. So, the land was lying in vain.

Since the land have fertile soil and was lying in vain, the villagers asked permission from the authority to make the virgin land into cultivation land. They got permission from the authority. In this way the villagers turned 6000 acres of virgin land into cultivation land. When the transformation of the cleared land to cultivatable land was in progress, the Burmese military Battalion 228 based in Kalay Myo confiscated all the land in 1997 in the name of Land Reform Acts and made it their own. The military tried to cultivate by using convicts labourers and soldiers. But they were not successful due to malaria epidemic and many other hardship. Thus, the military had to give up the land for the second time.

The villagers were reluctant to see a vast expanse of land with fertile soil lying in vain. So that they approached the SPDC officer whether there is any possible way to get back the land which they had invested much of their labours. The officer replied them that if they could pay Kyats 50,000 /- per house hold, he will approach the case to the higher authority. Thus the villagers collected Kyats 50,000/- per house hold and gave it to Falam District Peace and Development Council chairman. There are more than 200 house holds

in Haikhawl village which is about 10 miles from Kaley Myo.

Land confiscation using for racial discrimination

-- *Rhododendron News*, March 1999

(The following interview was conducted on 9 January, 1999 in New Delhi, India)

Name : Thangkhanpau (name changed)

Age : 48

Sex : Male

Nationality : Chin

Religion : Christian

Marital Status : Married with 8 children aged between 23 and 6

Occupation : Farmer

Political affiliation : NLD organiser for Pyin Gone Gyi Village Tract, Kalemyo township

I am a farmer. I used to have some land in Pyin Gone Gyi village [near Kalemyo], but I sold it in 1994, because it was too far from our house, about 8 miles, and also because all my children were at school, so they could not help in the farm work.

Then in December 1996, I left Pyin Gone Gyi because I no longer felt safe as an NLD organiser. I moved to Aung Chan Tha, a remote village along the road between Kalewa and Monywa. Aung Chan Tha is a Burman village in Kalewa township [Kalewa township is mostly Burman]. It has about 160 houses, and is located in a malaria-infested jungle about 24 miles from Kalewa. Back in 1995, my eldest son had stayed with the headman in that village, and found some land to clear for cultivation. I paid 50,000 Kyats for over 20 acres. This was quite cheap. Of course, the area had no irrigation system, and the harvest would depend on the rains. I moved in Aung Chan Tha with 8 other Chin families. We created a new ward in the village and cleared the land.

Q. To whom did you pay that money?

A. To the villagers who owned that land. In Burma the land belonged to the government, but people can register it and use it. The previous owners had registered that land, and it was recognised by the village head, who is the Village Tract PDC Chairman. The transaction was signed in front of the headman [a perfectly legal transaction].

However, we could only get one harvest of paddy. On 2.8.1997, the SLORC Township Secretary, Major Khin Maung Than, came to the village for the school opening ceremony. Without inspection, he called the 9 Chin families, including mine. Immigration and Forestry officials came along with him. He requested us to sit in one line in front of him. He took photographs of us, and ordered: "You, Chin people, you must go back to your native land in the Chin Hills! This is not your land!" He ordered us to leave by the end of December 1997. I pleaded him: "We have already planted our paddy. Please let us harvest it, and allow us to stay until the month of March!" In the end,

the Major forced us to sign a document that we agreed to leave the land before the end of February 1998. The Major then returned to Kalewa, and never reappeared after that. We went to Kalemyo and left a letter of complaints to the District PDC [Kalewa Township is under Kalemyo District].

We broke the agreement, and in April 1998, we were still using our land. Then, during the first week of May, the head of the Forestry Department from Kalewa Township, U Tun Than Oo, came to order us to vacate the land and leave the village immediately. He ordered the village head to call 'volunteer labourers' [forced labour] from each family, and plant teak seedlings on our land. Even in our house compound. They didn't order us to demolish our house, but they ordered the villagers to destroy our vegetable garden and plant teak saplings in it. Even to put saplings under our house! My sugar canes besides my house were cut down, and left lying there. We were even ordered to participate in this labour on our own land, but we refused. They never took action for that. The other villagers had a lot of pity on us.

Q. Did the order come from the Forest Department?

A. Yes, but Tun Than Oo was given all authority by Major Khin Maung Than, the Secretary of the Kalewa Township PDC.

Q. What happened after they confiscated your land?

A. We had no money to move back to Pyin Gone Gyi. One family left for the Chin hills, and we finally managed to go back to Pyin Gone Gyi in September 1998. At that time, the political situation was very tense in Kalemyo, and many NLD members were arrested. My party advised me not to go back to Pyin Gone Gyi village with my large family and no money, but rather leave the country. I borrowed money for the transportation costs and I arrived in Mizoram in October 1998 with my whole family.

Q. You said Aung Chan Tha is a Burman village. Was there any local tension when the 9 Chin families moved there?

A. Not at all. We had absolutely no problem with the Burman villagers. My son was even chosen as a Village PDC Chairman for a while. Our 9 Chin families being all Christian decided to build one church in our ward. The Burman villagers, all Buddhist, even helped us to build our Church and lend us their bullock cart to carry the building material. At the church opening ceremony, a pastor from Kalewa was invited, and all the Burman villagers came. We shared a meal together. We never had any problems with the Burman villagers. It was all created by the SPDC authorities. Tun Than Oo also complained about the Church because it was not registered at the Ministry, but our headman had recognised it.

Forced labour

SPDC soldiers target Chin women for porters

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 8, 2007: It has been learnt that Burmese soldiers of LIB 50, positioned at Rezua town in southern part of Chin state, are using more women in porter to carry their ration since the beginning of the year, the local villager reported to CHRO. The Burmese army LIB 50 battalion headquarters is in Gankaw.

During the last week of January, 2007, 18 porters were summoned by the Burmese army to carry their ration from Sawti village to Zuamang village. Most of the porters were women. Each porter had to carry a heavy load of ration for the army for a full day journey on foot.

Chin Christian women compelled to do manual works at Buddhist monastery --

Rhododendron News, January-February 2007

January 24, 2007: Chairman of Thantlang townships Peace and Development Council in northern Chin state has summoned asked all female government servants in the town to do manual works such as cleaning and decorating a Buddhist monastery in Thantlang town on November 11, 2006. The incident was reported to CHRO by one of the local who witness and hear the complaint from the women.

The women, especially Chin Christians as most of them are, felt insult and humiliated by the authority by compelling them to do the job against their wills. However, they can not afford to refuse the order as the authority threatened them that any one who refuses to do the job will face a day worth salary cut.

The monastery is the only Buddhist building in Thantlang town with very few Buddhists. "I think calling to clean the monastery is just to humiliate us, because they can call men and the Buddhists can clean this temple by themselves. But we are afraid of being cutting our salary if we don't go", said a woman who was called to work.

SPDC used child labor in road construction

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

January 29, 2007: 16 villages in Cikha township were forced to repair road connecting Cikha and Tonzang town. The order to call for road repair comes directly from SPDC Tactical 1 Commander Colonel Tin Hla based in Hakha, the capital of Chin state.

The order of forced labor on road repair was convey through U Aung Kyaw Than, chairperson of Cikha Township Peace and Development Council, the local villager who was also called as force labor said.

One person from each family from 16 villages has to go for the road construction with their food and tools. The working period was one week for each village to cover 12 miles long road.

The 16 villages have to take turn unceasingly working to repair the road from the end of November till today. Several under age girls and boys are among the forced laborers.

One person per family is compulsory without exception. U Kam Khan Lian, a new member of Khaicin village heads and a villager asked U Kyaw Than, chairman of Township Peace and Development Council to give leave as one of their close relative was died and they have to attend the funeral. But the chairman denied them, and instead slapped them for disobedience to the order, the local villager who witnessed reported.

The name of the villages who went for the road construction were Khuaivum, Tuivel-zaang, Tualkhaing, Haicin, Sekpi, Selbung, Tuimai, Lingthu, Vaivet, Tuimang, Mauvom, Kansau, Khuadam, Suangzaang and Khenman village.

Civilians forced to work at army camp

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

January 12, 2007: 2nd Battalion Commander Major Khin Maung Cho from LIB 274 based in Sabawng te village, Matupi township, southern Chin state has called 72 villagers from 3 villages to repair Sabawngte army camp for 5 days, starting from November 7, 2006, without payment, the local villager who was also forced to work in the camp reported to CHRO.

In addition, Sergeant Htay Win of Sabawngte army camp has commanded the Lungmang village's chairman to send 18 workers to repair the camp bring their own foods tools to repair the fence of the army camp said U Cia Mu.

The villagers were forced to complete 100 meter long fence within 5 days. The villagers have to cut woods and bamboos and carry with their back for the camp at the place which is more than one mile from the camp. Like wise, in Lungcawi village, and Sabawng te village which were under the control of the battalion, 54 villagers were also forced to work without payment.

“While working as forced laborers for the Burmese army villagers were humiliated by the soldiers showing no respect at all as human being “ said U Cia Mu who was also participated in the forced labor.

SPDC summoned 7 villagers for road construction

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

Jan 11, 2007: Colonel San Aung, the commander of tactical No. 2 based in Matupi, southern Chin state called civilians from 7 villages for road construction between Matupi town and Lailenpi military camp which is 70 miles long without paying any wages, the local villager reported to CHRO.

Colonel San Aung instructed the 7 village headmen to contribute 20 people per village from each 7 villages. The names of the 7 villages are Tangku, Rengkheng, Amlai, Pakheng, Sumseng (A), Sumseng (B), and Tinnam, the villager added.

In the previous years the road was built by the villagers with compulsory volunteer labor, and in November 2006, the villagers have to extend to be able to drive a car from Matupi town to LaiLenpi battalion which is 70 miles away. Construction of the road is part of border area development project.

In order to build the path as a vehicle road, 140 villagers from 7 villages have to go to the place which is 10 miles far, between Tangku village and Sumseng village by bringing their own equipments and without getting any payment, the villager who was among the forced laborers said.

SPDC forced 100 villagers to build military camp

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 26, 2007: Company commander from Burma army LIB 55 (Boo-Ti-Taung based battalion), presently posted in Shinletwah village, Paletwah town ship in southern Chin state, has forced 100 villagers from 10 villages under his military control on January 27, 2007, the local villager reported to CHRO.

Commander of the company (name unknown) has gave order to 10 villages which are under his military control to send 10 villagers from each village to report on the given date to Shinletwah battalion to build army camp, said the local villager.

According the order from the company commander, 10 villagers from Para village were sent to Shinletwah area to cut bamboo and wood. The other villagers also were order to cut bamboo and wood, the villager continued.

The villagers have to cut bamboos and woods from the place which is one mile far from the village, and brought to the camp. They were also commanded to build fence for the camp within 2 days. The working time was 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, and they have to bring their own foods and equipments for work during their work days in the camp.

Villagers forced to work at army own tea plantation farm

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 22, 2007: Sergeant Nay Myo Aung of Burma army presently posted at Rezua army camp (LIB 50 Gan-Gaw based battalion), southern Chin state has called the local

villagers to work at military owned tea plantation farm, the local villager reported to CHRO.

Nay Myo Aung has sent the order to chairman of Village Peace and Development Council to send 10 villagers from Zuamang village to Rezua army camp immediately on January 9, 2007. Unable to refuse the order, chairman of Zuamang Village Peace and Development Council has sent 8 villagers to work at the army own tea plantation farm, said the villager.

“When the villagers got to the army camp, sergeant Nay Myo Aung told us to work for 3 days. During their work the military did not provide any foods, so we have to bring our own foods and worked for free”, said the villager.

SPDC forced civilians for road repair

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 21, 2007: Company commander Ye Kyaw Soe, presently posted at Sabawngte army camp from LIB 50 Gan-Kaw based battalion, forced civilians from 3 villages to repair Sumsem – Lailenpi mortorable road starting from December 28, 2007. Villagers were ordered to finish the job within 10 days, the local villager said.

In the order letter from the company commander, it said that Hlungmang villagers have to reach to the project site to build mortorable road between Lailepi village and Sumsem village. The villagers have to dig a road which has at least 6 feet wide.

As soon as the villagers got the order 20 villagers have to go to Sabawngte village with their own rations and equipments to work on the road. No one can absent for the project. The works lasted for 10 days without any compensation.

The number of the villagers who were engage in the road repair are 15 villagers from Hlungmang village, 25 villagers from Sabawngpi village, and 25 villagers from Sabawngte village. The villagers worked for 10 days for the project.

Villagers compelled to fence army camp in Dar-Lin

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 9, 2007: Major Zaw Myint Htat, 2nd battalion commander from Burma army Battalion LIB 50 (based in Gangh-Gaw town), stationed at Dar-Lin village of Matupi town ship, southern Chin state, had ordered the villagers in the region to fence their camp's barricade by carrying their own rations, the local villager said.

In order to implement the order of Burma army, Pintia village chairman Pu Pai Hmo had assigned U Ngun Thot, U Khain Be, U Ta Lay Che, Myo Naw Khain and Mg Nyo Mo in

the construction of fencing the army camp. They had carried bamboo in the jungle which is three miles away from Dar-Lin Army camp, according to one of the victims.

“Soldiers themselves should have done this work of fencing the camp as this is their duty, but they forced us to do the job” said one of the victims. Those individual who involved in the fencing construction were called to work from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm without rest for four days without payment” added by one of the victim.

Major Zaw Muint Htat, since his appointment as commander of Dar-Lin Army camp had started enforcing the villagers in fencing, carrying water, portering and cutting bamboo. Such enforcement has been practiced more often from this year and the villagers are known to have much suffering for years without getting payment of their labor.

SPDC soldiers continue to use villagers as porters

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

January 2, 2007: Captain Han Lin from Burmese army battalion LIB 550 based in Ponna-Kyun town of Arakan state), temporarily stationed at Shinletwah camp, Paletwah town ship in southern Chin state was patrolling the area along with his 13 soldiers. The captain and his troop was traveling village to village and they use villagers for porter on November 5, 2006 the local villager reported to CHRO.

Captain Han Lin and his troop along with 5 villagers from Hamarte village reached to Sha-Oo village. While they were in the village, all the villagers were in their farms.

Taking advantage of the absents of the villagers they camped in U Pa Khaing's house while the family was absent and they shot chicken and cook the food as their will.

In the next morning captain Han Lin and the troop used another 5 villagers from Sha-Oo village as potter as they continued to Para village.

Local villagers compelled to serve as guides for Burma Army

-- *Rhododendron News* January-February 2007

February 17, 2007: On February 5, captain Win Zaw and his troop from Burma army LIB 268 based in Falam town, northern Chin state summoned several villagers from Indo-Burma border area to serve as guide and ensure the security of tactical commander Colonel Tin Hla and his column.

Villagers must take responsibility for the security of the Colonel and to serve guide during his travel to Tedim area during the second week of February. Colonel Tin Hla chairman of Chin State Peace and Development Council and his troop were planning to travel from Falam to Teddim.

Captain Win Zaw told the chairman of Tuisen-Phai village to arrange 4 villagers to serve as porter and guide for the Colonel. 4 villagers were taken from Tuisen-Phai village to Thing-Lei village to serve as porter and guide for the soldiers.

“We have to bring rations for them and have to carry their belongings up to their battalion. We spent 2 days, but got nothing for our wages”, the local villager continued. The other villager who was also taken as potter said that they were told to provide chicken and food during the 4 days journey to the area.

After reaching Tuisen-Phai village, other villages around the area namely; Bukphir village, Fartlang village, Dampi village, Zimpi village, Zimte village and Thing lei village have to take their turn to accompany the military officer and group till they reach Rihkhuadar battalion, the resource said.

SPDC soldiers use porters

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 8, 2007: 2nd Lieutenant from Burma army LIB 140 (based in Matupi), stationed at Satu village of Matupi township along with five soldiers had summoned Aikah villagers up to Lailente village for porter a local villager reported to CHRO.

The said mistreatment was conducted by the Burmese soldiers on January 14, 2007, and the porters have to carry armaments and they were deployed up to Lailente village which was 20 miles away from Satu village which is a day journey from Lailente. An old man (about 60 years) was also included among the porters, said one of the victims.

Destruction of churches and crosses in Chin State,

-- *Carrying the Cross*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, February 2007 (extracts)

In Chin State, it has become, according to Chins interviewed by Christian Solidarity Worldwide, “almost impossible” to build a church or church building. Instead, the regime has been systematically destroying churches and crosses, which the Chins have traditionally built on hilltops and road-sides as a symbol of their faith. According to Salai Bawi Lian Mang, “destruction of crosses started around the early 1990s with the rapid increase in army battalions established across Chin State. Since then, almost every cross in all the nine townships in Chin State has been destroyed by the regime. ... Many of them have been replaced with Buddhist pagodas and statues of Buddhist monks.”...Throughout the 1990s, construction or renovation of many churches was forbidden.

TPDC forces villagers to widen road on Indo-Burma border

-- *Khonumthung News*, 21 February 2007

15 February 2007: Several villagers are being forced to work on the widening of the Than Tlang–Farkawn Road that links Burma to the northeast parts of India as of February 12.

Villagers from Vang Zang track that includes Tlanglo, Tlangpi, Farrawn, Vang Zang and Sopum village in Than Tlang Township are being forced to work on the border road widening that is all of 30 miles long.

Laito, Chairman of Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC), from Than Tlang Township, has ordered five villages in Than Tlang Township to work on the road construction.

The villagers were told to also extend the nine feet wide Than Tlang – Rih Road to 12 feet. The construction work will have to be concluded before the 'Army Day', formerly known as 'Revolutionary Day' of Burma that falls on March 27.

"I have no idea why they are doing this since the present road is wide enough for trucks to pass. So far, there is no vehicular traffic along this road," said a villager from Chin state on condition of anonymity.

Moreover, the authorities have failed to provide tools and food to villagers who are being subjected to forced labour, said a villager from Chin state.

A villager wondered how long people would be forced and how long it would take to construct the road that will link Than Tlang via Rih to Farkawn village in Champhai town in Mizoram.

Villagers in Chin state complained that being engaged in *Jatropha* cultivation and in road construction will affect work on their farms and cultivation would suffer.

"I think we might not get time to slash the trees in farmlands as authorities are engaging us in different kind of work," said a villager from Chin state.

Military authorities in Chin state started construction of a road that would connect Chin state to India with forced labour by villagers in 1996.

Chin officials accused of forced labour

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 24 January, 2007

Residents in Hakha township, Chin State said today they had been forced by local authorities to help build a road connecting the township with Marndaw.

"Hakha's township peace and development chairman ordered us to work . . . about twelve villages are in work now. Every village has to take duty for building in their area. It'll be 52 miles long," one resident told DVB.

While locals said the forced labour had been going on since last month, the township peace and development chairman denied the claims.

“There’s no forced labour. We build the road with bulldozers,” the chairman said. But he admitted using residents for forced labour in the past, saying “Since we were directed by the Ministry for Home Affairs, we did not do such procedures again.”

Locals also complained today over being forced by the authorities to grow castor plants, saying their normal crops and livelihoods had suffered as a result.

SPDC Authority Forced Hundreds Of Local Villagers To Repair India-Burma Border Trade Road

-- *Rhododendron News*, September-October 2006

October 13, 2006: According to the villager who wants to remain anonymous inform the CHRO that 11 villages from Northern Chin state along India-Burma border trade road were compel to work repairing the road for six days without pay. The forced labor ordered was issued by the chairman of Townships Peace and Development Council in Tedim town, northern Chin state and 11 villages in the area were engaged in forced labor repairing the landslide damaged road for 6 days September 4 to 9, 2006.

Among the six villages those who were compel to work on road repair, 67 villagers are from Zimte village led by a local name Khaw Neih Lal. We have to bring our own food tools and everything said one villager. The villagers inform CHRO that there were 275 people from other villages working in the road repair.

Those villages compel to engage in the forced labor are from; Lamzang, Laitui, Haimual Khuahlun, Haimual Khuathar, Zimpi, Zimte, Rihkawdar, Tio, Lentlang, Kaptel and Tihbual.

CHRO source said that it is impossible for the villagers to refuse the order for forced labor as the order is coming from the office of Township Peace and Development Council.

Townships Peace and Development Council take this road repair seriously because when Colonel Tin Hla from Tactical Command 1 visited Tedim town in August, he went to Tio village, near Indo- Burma border. On his return to Tedim, he called the whole townships meeting and ordered the Township Peace and Development Council to repair the road saying that the road he traveled is not good for the security.

Villagers forced as porters

-- *Rhododendron News*, September-October 2006

10 October 2006: Burmese soldiers patrolling the Indo–Burma border are engaging villagers from southern part of Chin state in Burma to carry army supplies.

Major Aung Lin Thwat, and 15 soldiers of the Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. (16) camped in Sabawngte village in Matupi Township in the first week of September. They began patrolling the Indo-Burma border area.

Burmese soldiers called up seven villagers from Sabawngte and forced them to carry backpacks and rations to the military camp in Darling Village.

According to villager from Sabawngte village who was forced to work as a porter, the goods carried by each villager weighed around 12 kilograms.

Villagers residing on the patrol route relayed army supplies from one village to another.

Likewise, on September 14, Captain Han Linn from LIB 550 leading 13 security personnel reportedly directed U Thet Do, head of Pintia village in Paletwa Township, to provide two chickens and four kilograms of rice.

U Thet was also instructed to recruit villagers as porters. Ten villagers along with him had to start transporting army rations and personnel stuff on the same day. They arrived at the Shinletwa army camp on September 15.

Moreover, it was also learnt that Burmese soldiers had hardly provided food, labourers wages and reimbursed expenditure villagers incurred in transporting army supplies.

SPDC Force Villagers To Search For A Lost Gun

-- *Rhododendron News*, September-October 2006

22 September 2006: In Matupi Township in Southern Chin State, Burmese troops led by a Major from LIB 304 were returning from patrol in the area during the last week of July. When they reached the Valawn stream, which is about 10 miles away from Matupi, a Corporal lost his G3 gun in the river. Villagers and travelers near the river were forced to search for the gun for one week, one of the villagers who participated in the search reported to CHRO.

The place where the SPDC lost the gun is near Lungtum-Kingsing River at the lower part of Hnawte village. The corporal lost his gun as he was crossing the river at 8:00 pm. The troop gathered villagers from the nearby village and forced travelers to search for the gun. On the first day, a man dove into the thick river after tying a rope to his waist. Another man then had to pull him to the side of the river. This is how the search proceeded.

When they could not find the gun, they had to build a small dam to change the direction of the river. But due to the heavy rains, the river was not affected. While searching for the gun, the troops ordered the villagers from Hnawte and Tinglong villages to bring 10 bags of rice from each village. Each family from the two villages also had to bring a chicken.

The troop also ordered all the government departments from Matupi town to send 3 persons each plus 10 persons from each block of the town to the river to search for the gun. U Oon Lwin, secretary of Union Solidarity Development Association , and U Cang Va, chief of Immigration department, were in charge of sending the villagers.

SPDC Conscribed Villagers For Militia Training, Collect Ration And Money From Civilians

-- *Rhododendron News*, September-October 2006

September 10, 2006: According to a villager who want to remain anonymous inform CHRO that Tactical Commander Colonel San Aung, based in Matupi Township, Southern Chin state issued order to be collected 4, 000 Kyats, and 25 cups of rice from every household in the area. The money and the ration is to be used for the second military training in the area which will take 40 days starting from August 20. Villagers who are between 35, and 45 years of age from 12 village tracks are compel to join the military training. The training has taken placed in Phaneng village's playing ground which is about 4 miles from Matupi town. The villagers who are in the training have to pay 2, 000 Kyats at the beginning of the training and the trainees will be asked to pay as the authority demand them through the training. More over, the local villagers also have to provide the daily for the 4 trainers, including an army Major from LIB 140, and 3 police men a sergeant and two corporals. The villagers are not happy about doing this, but they have no choice said the source.

The SPDC did not provide accommodation for the trainees. Local families also had to accommodate trainees who came from other villages because there was no other lodging for them. The villagers who did not participate in the military training had to work in the farms of the families who were at the training. As a result, the trainees and the local villagers lacked adequate food supplies, according to the villager.

The villages that were forced to participate in the military training were; Phaneng, Ngaleng, Vuitu, Kace, Khongang, Tangku, Cawngthia, Tinglong, Hnawte, Valangpi, Valangte, Leisin, Hlangpang.

According to source, the authorities are planning to call women for the next militia training, and the limit of age will be between 45 to 55 years of age.

200 Local Civilians Trains For Militia

-- *Rhododendron News*, September-October 2006

12 September 2006: The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has opened a militia training centre in Chin state Matupi, and are now training over 200 villagers of the ages between 35 to 45 from 11 villages.

The training started on August 20 at the play ground in PhaNeng village in Matupi townships. A local said that the authorities have ordered to train one person from each family.

Lieutenant Colonel Ye Lyun, commander of Light Infantry Battalion 140 is leading the training. For the trainees each family has to provide two kilograms of rice and Kyat 1,000 per week.

Besides, the other family members will have to clean the trainees' farms thrice a week. If they fail to clean, the authorities will punish them, said a local.

According to reports, the villagers from Phaneng, Ngalleng, Cawngthia, Tibaw, Hnawte, Valangpi, Tinlawng, Leiring, Khuangang, Vuitu and Tangku tracts are to be included in the training which will end in September 17.

The order states that if 25 persons cannot attend in one group they will give extreme punishment.

The SPDC used to have army training centres in Chin state and they forced the public to attend the training every year in order to protect the nation.

Villagers Forced To Construct Army Camp

-- *Rhododendron News*, September-October 2006

Villagers from Chin state, Burma were conscripted by the Burmese Army in the first week of September to construct bunkers encircling military camps on the Indo – Burma border area.

In what is yet another form of harassment “ We are involved in bunker construction for five days a week and our working hours are from 7:a.m. to 6 p.m.”, said Mr. Paik Hmo who was involved in building bunkers.

On September 8, Sergeant Kyaw Maung Win from the Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. (16) Headquartered in Monywa town, Sagaing Division, along with his soldiers on patrol arrived in Pintia village in Matupi Township. He directed U Ngawn Thawng, village head of Pintia, to send six villagers to the army camp at once.

Afraid of defying the order of the military, the villagers got down and started digging trenches. The measurements of constructed bunkers are 250 ft in length and 2 feet in width.

Mr. Paik Hmo added, “we were able to take rest only during lunch which was from 11 a.m. to 1p.m”.

In a bid to beef up military presence in Chin state, 15 security personnel, fully armed, from LIB (16) arrived and were stationed at Darling Village in Matupi township in the first week of June this year.

Women used as porters by Burma army in northern Chin State

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 26 September 2006

Infantry Battalion (IB) – 226 of Burma army in charge of border security at northern Chin State's Tunzan Township in northwest Burma bordering India, has been forcing local women to be military porters and landmine sweepers.

"I told them I have (young) children and that I could not go but they would not accept it," an unidentified woman from Heinkyin Village in Tunzan Township told DVB. "If we didn't go they beat us from behind. Some people could not carry things and cried. But they were given no rest. When it was night, I told them that I have children and want to home, and asked them permission but they would not accept it."

A woman porter who fled into India also told DVB that there were 8 people in her group of porters and that they each had to carry army rations weighing up to 20 kilos and they were not given food either. Women porters were also beaten up and swore at like their male counterparts. They had to beg food at villages on their way home.

The porters and villagers were not allowed to worship freely as they are Christians and the soldiers demanded fresh produce from their farms also.

The Forced Labor Pandemic

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2005

Forced labor is still a pandemic plaguing Burma's impoverished communities, in spite of repeated claims by the military regime that the practice no longer exists.

In western Burma's Chin State alone, no less than 40 cases of forced labor have been documented since the beginning of this year. Thousands of civilians from mostly rural communities participated in forced labor requisitioned by military officers from local army units stationed at villages to the highest chain of commands, Tactical Command I and II, responsible for the administration of the whole Chin State under Northwestern Divisional Command.

At the conclusion of the meeting of the International Labor Organization Governing Body in March of 2005, the agency monitoring the situations of forced labor in Burma noted "grave concern" and concluded that Burma's ruling military regime still lacks a serious political will to address the issues of forced labor in the country.

A major impediment to ‘eradicating’ the use of forced labor in Burma is the culture of impunity with which military commanders and personnel operate, especially in militarized zones. In Chin State, a region that has been increasingly militarized during the last few years, government troops regularly requisition forced labor from civilians in their areas to construct or renovate military camps and outposts and forced people as young as those in primary schools to carry army rations and supplies.

Requisitions for forced labor are not just the case of junior officers and army unit commanders exercising power in violation of directives from the top prohibiting the use of forced labor by army personnel, nor are they isolated incidents as has been portrayed by the military regime. Many of the forced labor incidents involving mass civilian populations are a result of direct requisition orders by Tactical Command No. 1 and No. 2, the highest military authorities in Chin State.

Reported incidents of forced labor in Chin State have gone up in the past year and increased militarization is one key factor. The expansion of army presence in southern Chin State with the establishment of Tactical Command II is largely responsible for increased use of forced labor by the army. The ongoing construction of trans-national highway between India and Burma is also responsible for significant portion of reported forced labor incidents. Many incidents of forced labor can be attributed to infrastructural development projects associated with the naming of two new Townships in Chin State, Rih Township and Ruazua Township. Another major source of forced labor requisition is the regime’s Tea Plantation Project. Hundreds of acres of private lands have been confiscated and tens of thousands of civilian populations are being regularly forced to work at the ‘tea plantations.’

The regime’s purported criminalization of the use of forced labor has not been paralleled by realities documented on the ground. In fact, forced labor has become a pandemic that is ravaging the livelihood of already impoverished communities in Chin State. The fact that forced labor is regularly requisitioned by the highest authorities clearly indicates that not only is the use and practice of forced labor still condoned but those responsibly for exacting compulsory labor do so with impunity.

Exposing the practice of forced labor in wherever, whenever and whatever form they occur in Burma is what will keep the regime in check. Chin Human Rights Organization is committed to providing reliable information of human rights situations in western Burma regions. We are thankful for the continued supports we receive from concerned individuals, groups and organizations around the world. CHRO is particularly grateful to the National Endowment for Democracy for supporting the works of CHRO for the last several years.

Forced labour in Maputi Township

-- *Khonumthung News, Rhododendron News* via *Burma Human Rights Yearbook, 2005*

On 15 May 2005, it was reported that Second Warrant Officer Kyaw Sein chief in charge of SPDC LIB 140 in Lailenpi village forced Satu villagers to transport rations and supplies from Matupi Township for the construction of a new military camp in Satu village. One person from each household was required to transport supplies from Bawi Ring village to Satu village, a distance of 20 miles. The villagers did not know the amount of time they were required to serve or the amount of rice that was necessary to bring for their own sustenance. Although villagers were told that they would be exempt if they each gave 38 tins of rice to the military, villagers who provided the rice were still forced to porter. (Source: "New Military Camp: Anguish For The People," *Khonumthung*, 15 May 2005).

On 15 July 2005, Battalion Comdr. Sgt. Tin Soe of SPDC IB 305 based in Matupi 10 forced primary school children to carry rations and supplies. Commencing in Sabawngte army camp, different groups of villagers were responsible for transporting rations from one village to the next with the ultimate destination of Laienpi army camp. Ten students and 5 civil servants were conscripted in Mala village. The students carried the rations 12 miles before 2 became too tired to go any further and encountered 5 Laienpi villagers who took their places. The children were forced to carry the following:

1. 10 tins of rice;
2. 10 bottles of cooking oil;
3. 10 viss of fish paste; and
4. 5 viss of dried chilly. (Source: "SPDC Forced Primary School Children to Porter," *Rhododendron News*, CHRO, 8 August 2005).

Burma army uses forced labour at Chin State

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 15 January 2005

"The soldiers of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) are forcing the local population in Chin State to be military porters, carrying army supplies and building new army outposts.

Moreover, there have been reports of sexual harassments and rapes committed against the local women by the soldiers.

These soldiers are said to be from Infantry Battalion (LIB) – 269 based at Tunzang and Tiddim Townships in northern Chin State. A Chin local resident told DVB that the soldiers are forcing the villagers from Pan Khaing Village to build army outposts and carry army supplies to areas, 30 miles away from their village, near the Indian borders. Villagers have also been detained against their will at army bases, and they are forced to

do menial jobs such as drawing water for soldiers. During the night, the soldiers visit the homes of the villagers with the excuse of checking the guest lists, and do unsavoury things to women folks especially those without men folks.

There has also been an increase posting of Burmese soldiers in neighbouring Htantalan and Matupi Townships in southern Chin State since 1994. The soldiers have been forcing the local people to be military porters, "volunteers" and confiscating their lands, prompting thousands of villagers to flee to the neighbouring countries and living as refugees or illegal migrants."

Burmese authorities extorting money from farmers in Chin State

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 13 December 2004

...A local resident told DVB that the authorities are also forcing the villagers to build a road for the junta without pay. They are being forced to break and carry stones used for the building of the road.

Arbitrary Agricultural Policy Results in Forced Labor

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2002

10 June 2002. New agriculture policy being implemented in Chinland is adversely affecting the local population. In many parts of Chinland, government servants and ordinary villagers are being required to participate in tea plantation program under the order of the ruling military junta. "Seven villages in Falam township were ordered to participate in tea plantation in the designated areas of about 20 to 30 acres this monsoon season," according to a local source.

On 12 May 2002, during a visit to Falam town, the SPDC's Agriculture Minister encouraged the local people to participate in the government's tea plantation program. The minister said that both the government servants and the civilians must cooperate for the success of tea plantation.

According to the orders of the junta, people must provide free labor for the tea plantation, and any government servants who question or are opposed to the "new policy" will be fired from their jobs.

The authorities designated the surrounding areas of Falam town stretching as far down as the west bank of Manipur River as tea plantation farm.

Ordinary civilians from Cawngte, Tlaisun, Cawnggheng, Zamual, Sunthla, Lungpi, and Mangkheng villages were forced to provide free labor for tea planting. Households that could not afford to provide forced labor had to hire laborers at the rate of 300 Kyats per day for male, and 250 Kyats for a female out of their own expenses. However, members

of Union Solidarity and Development Association USDA, a state-sponsored youth organization, and other government officials are exempted from the forced labor.

In 2001, similar tea plantation programs were implemented in Matupi and Thanlang townships forcing civilians to participate in unpaid labor.

Burma's ruling junta officially outlawed the practice of forced labor in 2000 in response to international outcry for its systematic and widespread use of forced labor. Under close scrutiny by the International Labor Organization, the junta maintains that it has "eradicated" the practice of forced labor in the country. However, government's "development programs" and other counter-insurgency are perpetuating and reinforcing the practice of forced labor in Burma.

Development Project Left 100 People Forced To Work Daily: 180 Houses To Be Relocated

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2002

The State Peace and Development Council SPDC in Chin State is using forced labor to build a new high school in Ruazua town of central Chinland as part of state-sponsored development program for the new township headquarters, according to CHRO source.

About 100 people are compelled to provide unpaid labor on a daily basis to dig an area of one square mile ground where the foundation for the new high school will be laid. The forced labor began in mid May 2002.

In a related incident, about 180 houses are to be relocated to give way for a new army camp to be set up in the area. The SPDC authority issued an order affecting the relocation of the houses.

Located between two major towns, Matupi and Thantlang in central Chin state, Ruazua village became the tenth township headquarters in Chin State in 2002. The application for the township status was made since 1988 so that Ruazua could enjoy government facilities such as high school, hospital etc. "The village had put enormous efforts to meet the criteria for township status and tried very hard to convince the authority by constructing road, water supply, self-support high school etc., all without State support." According to the local people, they spent about 2 million Kyats to convince the authority and to acquire the status.

However, as soon as Ruazua was awarded township status in 2002, about 100 houses from Old Village Block were ordered to relocate at areas designated by the army so that the Burmese army could build a new army battalion headquarters on the sites. 80 more houses have to vacate their house to allow road extension between the would-be army headquarters and the town.

The SPDC is unlikely, as in all other similar circumstances, to compensate those who are subject to forced labor and relocation, and as a result the affected people may face serious crises.

Robbery, extortion, arbitrary taxation

Chins forced to contribute to TPDC

-- *Khonumthung News*, 23 February 2007

In what seems to be another name for extortion, TPDC authorities in Chin state are collecting money from people as a part of a fund raising drive to serve the Myanmar military regime.

U Zaw Win Thay, chairman of Township Peace and Development Council in Falam Township, issued a directive to residents of town and village areas in Falam that each household in Falam Township must pay Kyat 50 (Myanmar currency) on a monthly basis to administrative offices in different areas.

The orders were passed to residents through heads of village councils and the payment shall have to be completed before the end of every month.

TPDC authorities held discussions with all heads and staff members of village councils from different villages in Falam at a meeting where the secretary of the TPDC appealed to village heads and staff to persuade the people to be more involved in contributing cash, according to sources close to the head of the village council.

The idea of collecting money from people was to raise funds was to play host to TPDC authorities when they go to villages for inspection, the source added.

It was learnt that the directive regarding collecting money did not exempt hill farmers who are facing severe financial constraints.

"As a farm cultivator, paying Kyat 50 per month is not easy. But they forced us to pay" said a villager in Chin state.

"The fund raising activity is being conducted only in Falam Township . We have not received any report from other township in Chin state yet," he added.

There are over 50,000 households in 150 villages in Falam Township .

TPDC authorities in Falam began extortions for fund raising in 2001 but put a halt to it in 2006.

Provide ration or your village will be burnt

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 21, 2007: Company commander Ye Kyaw Soe of Burma army and his troop from Battalion LIB 50 (Gangh-Gaw based battalion), presently posted in Sabawngte village army camp in Matupi township in southern Chin state came to Hlungmang village on January 4, 2007 from Sabawngte. The soldiers asked 3 chickens from U Nawl Hlaung, member of Village Peace and

Development Council, and threatened him that they will burn his house if he refused to give, a local villager reported to CHRO.

Corporal Win Maung asked 3 chickens from U Naw Hlaung, commanding him to cook one chicken immediately and told him to make curry for tomorrow when his commander comes. Therefore, the member of Village Peace and Development Council collected 2 chickens from the villagers and give it to the solders, the local villager continued.

“Whenever the Burmese troop come we have to give them whatever they want, and it is compulsory, because they threatened us that they’ll burn our house and farms if we don’t give, and we are afraid of that”, the villager said.

Apart from taking the ration food and chicken from the villagers without compensation, 3 villagers were forced to serve as their porter. The 3 villagers were taken as potters to Sabawngte village which is 8 miles away from Hlungmang village.

Cultivate Jatophra plant or leave the village

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

January 9, 2007: Chairman of Tedim townships Peace and Development Council told all members of Block Peace and Development Council in a monthly meeting saying that villagers must cultivate Jatrophia plant or they have to leave the village.

In November 2006 meeting the chairman gave order every village in the township to plant jatrophia, a tree that will produce bio-diesel, before the end of December. Any one who do not cultivate accordance with the order must be driven out from the village, a local villager reported to CHRO.

During the meeting, the chairman instructed villager to plant one acre per house household with fences. The order is compulsory for the villagers to comply and the villagers have to buy the seeds from Township Peace and Development Council office, at the rate of 3,000/- Kyats per kilogram, added the local villager.

In November, authority from townships Peace and Development Council from Zingpi village collected 1,800/- kyats per family to buy Jett-Suu seeds. The remaining sum will be collected again in the coming month.

According to the local man the villagers from the Tedim area are afraid that the authority will drive them out from the village as they can not grow Jatrophia due to lack of money to buy the seeds and several other problems they are dealing with their daily lives.

SPDC soldiers collect ration from villagers

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 7, 2007: The SPDC soldiers of LIB 140, based at Leisen village of Matupi township in southern Chin state collect ration from their provisional local villagers to rely

their consumption, a local villager reported to CHRO.

In doing such, a village chairman Mr. Robem of Koe-La village of the cantonment area was in January 2007 assigned to confiscate six chickens and two cup of ration from each family. The villagers were then further ordered them to deliver the collected ration to the Leisen army camp.

Such kinds of rice and chickens confiscation have been committed every month that the surrounding villagers of Leisen areas are badly affected their livelihood as they never get the cost of their property from the military reported by the local villager.

Dar-Lin villagers have to pay for entertaining the army officer

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 5, 2007: 2nd Lieutenant Moe Htit Kyaw from Burma army LIB 50 (Gangh-Gaw based battalion), presently posted in Dar-Ling village, Matupi township in southern Chin state gave order to the village elders to buy a goat by 15,000/- kyats on December 28, 2006 for the visiting battalion commander.

2nd Lt. Moe Htit Kyaw invited the leaders of the village through U Bi Ceu, chairman of Village Peace and Development Council, and gave order to buy a goat with 15,000/- kyats to celebrate the visit of battalion commander Major Zaw Myint Htit. But the battalion commander never showed up.

Since the battalion commander did not come, 2nd Lt. Moe Htit Kyaw and his troop invited chairman of Dar-Ling Village Peace and Development Council, members of Village Peace and Development Council and the leaders of village to consume the goat. Villager chairman and elders were told then that they have to bear the cost of the goat which was meant to entertain the visiting battalion commander.

Villagers must buy jatophra seeds

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 26, 2007: Chairman of Tedim township Peace and Development Council has called a meeting to all the chairmen of Village Peace and Development Council in the township in the first week of January, 2007. The meeting was for discussion of jetropha plantation project in the area. In the meeting all village chairmen were instructed to pay their due for Jetropha seed to be planted accordance with their quota.

“During the year of 2006, while I was chairman of Village Peace and Development Council, we have started planting jetropha, but it was not successes. According to my experience I know that it won’t be successes, but since it is the government’s order we have to comply with the order.

Tuisenphai village and Thinglei village have submitted 35,000/- kyats to the township PDC accordance with their quota. They have to complete planting the seed by the month of March, and in the month of April, the chairman of Township Peace and Development Council himself will come and check, said the villager.

The result of the compulsory government's plan will be just wasting money, energy and just a waste for the civilians" said one of the village headmen who prefer to remain anonymous.

The SPDC fined 1,700,000 Kyats from 5 cattle traders

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 7, 2007: Lt. Colonel San Aung, Commander of tactical command 2 for southern Chin state has accused 5 cattle merchants as illegal smuggler and fined them 1,700,000/- kyats from them. Beside, he also sentenced them for long term prison, a local villager reported to CHRO.

The 5 cattle merchants were from Hakha, led by Mr. Pakham, and they came to Paletwah township to buy cattles in the month of November. In the end of November, Shin-let-wah battalion has arrested along with 8 cows and 8 buffalos, and were sent to Lei sin battalion, and lastly reached to tactical office in Matupi.

As the cattle merchants were handed to Matupi tactical office, 3 cows were left at Lei sen battalion for ration, and 2 buffalos were left at chairman of Valangpi Village Peace and Development Council. The other died on the way, and only 6 cattle were brought to Matupi, but were left for Tactical camp's ration, the local villager said.

While the merchants were lock out at Matupi tactical camp, Colonel San Aung has fined them 1,700,000/- kyats and sentenced them for long year prison and sent them to Pakhoke-ku prison in the midst of January, 2007, the resource said.

SPDC soldiers extort 400,000 Kyats from cattle traders

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

February 8, 2007: An unknown sergeant section commander from Burma army LIB 266 (based in Hakha town), stationed at Vuangtu village, Thantlang township in northern Chin state, along with three soldiers threatened the 2 cattle traders and asked 400,000/- kyats, a cattle trader who came to the border area reported to CHRO.

The incident took place at Lung-Cawipi village, Thantlang township, in the evening of February 5, 2007. The said sergeant and his men when meeting the cattle traders had asked 500,000/- kyats for 8 cows and threatened them with gun point that they pay the full demanded amount. Then, the traders were taken to Matupi army camp. The soldiers left 3 cows at Lei-sin army camp for the Burmese solders. The other two small cows were left at Valangpi village chairman for breeding.

When they arrived to Matupi, only 6 cows remain. All of them were seized by the soldiers for their own. In Matupi, the cattle traders were fined 1,700,000/- kyats each by Colonel San Aung. Besides, the traders were sentence to serve prison term in Pakokko, Magwe division.

Village headmen bear the burden of militia training

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

January 11, 2007: Colonel San Aung, commander of tactical No.2 based in Matupi town, southern Chin state called 30 villagers from 9 village tracks on October 10 to attend the militias training. The local villager reported to CHRO that this training is the second batch for the local villagers to attend militia training in this year.

On August 20, 2006, 250 villagers from 9 village tracks to attend militias training as the first batch. As the second batch the SPDC demanded 30 people from Cawngthia village tracks of Matupi township. The trainee must arrive on October 10 according to the order. Colonel San Aung demanded explanation from village headmen from Cawngthia village tracks because there were less than 30 people who could report to the SPDC on the deadline. If the explanation of the village headmen does not satisfy the Colonel, they will face severe punishment from the SPDC.

One of the participants from militias training said that most of the trainees from the first batch fled to India as they were afraid to be conscripted for the second batch.

One of the escapees said, "I was only 16 years old when they persuaded me to join the militias training. They said that when I join the training I'll be traveling to all the places and will see more things. So I joined the training, but things did not happen as they said. My family thought that I was dead. So as soon as I completed the training I fled."

SPDC soldiers looted from a farmer

-- *Rhododendron News*, January-February 2007

January 12, 2006: A sergeant from Burma army LIB 269 based in Tedim township, Tuisenphai village, of northern Chin state accused Mr. Suan Thawn from Tuidil village as illegal Mithun smuggler, and asked 150,000/- kyats on November 7, 2006, a local villager reported to CHRO.

Mr. Suan Tawn a farmer from Tuidil village took his own 2 Mithuns to sell in Mizoram. When he reached near Thinglei, beyond Zimte village a sergeant from Burma army (name unknown) and his troop met with him and demanded Kyat 150000/- from the villager accusing him of illegal cattle smuggler.

Mr. Suan Thawn explained the soldiers that he was not the cattle trader as they accused. He was just trying to sell his own cattle to feed his family with 5 children. However, the

sergeant insist that he is an illegal smuggler and he has to meet with the company commander at Zimte village.

Mr. Suan Thawn was then led to Zimte village. Before they reached to Zimte village he borrowed 150,000/- kyats from the church and gave the money to the sergeant. He was released after taking the money.

Mr. Suan Thawn reported the incident to CHRO saying that this kind of looting and is a common practice by the Burmese soldiers. Whenever the soldiers come to the village they demanded chicken, rice and whatever they want. It does not matter whether we give them or not, they just took it anyway.

Public fleeced for fencing army camps on Indo–Burma border

-- *Khonumthung News*, 15 November 2006, via *Burma News International*

In Burma even funds for the army's routine expenditure needs to come out of people's pocket. In order to renovate fences around army camps on the Indo–Burma border area, Burmese soldiers have been collecting money from villagers in Chin state.

Following directives from Major Kyaw Kyaw Oo of the Light Infantry Battalion No. (269) stationed in Lungler village in Thang Tlang Township, village heads of 19 villages in Thang Thang Township are busy collecting money from villagers for the fencing.

The deadline for submitting the money collected from villagers is the last week of December. And the amount of money to be collected will depend on the number of household in each village.

“Whenever a change over in battalions occurs in our village, we become the victims. We have to work for and pay them. As nobody dares to defy the orders, we keep doing whatever they ask,” said a villager from Thang Tlang Township.

For fencing the army camp, the military allegedly withdraws money from Lungler village funds. The money extorted from villagers range from Kyat 50,000 (Burma currency) to Kyat 100,000 per village.

The wood for the fencing needs to be replaced every year as soldiers often take away the wood that dry up for firewood.

What is worse is that cutting wood for fencing and repairing military camps is contributing to massive deforestation in Chin state.

The villagers who paid for the fencing of army camps are Zangtlang, Lungler, Fungkah, Sih Hmuh, Bung Khua, Rua Khua, Rua Buk, Thau, Bung Tlang, Tlanglo, Tlangpi, Lung Ding, Far Rawn, Vang Zang, So Pum, Dawn, Ral pel, Tah Tlang and Tlang Khua villages in Thang Tlang Township.

The fund collected from villagers will seemingly be spent for hiring workers to be paid on a daily basis.

SPDC Authorities Collect Money From Local Residence For Buddhist Water Festival

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

18 June 2006, Colonel Tin Hlah, chairman of the SPDC, collected money from stores in Hakha, the capital city of Chin State, for the Buddhist water festival. During the first week of April 2006, Colonel Tin Hlah forced the owners of stores in Hakha to pay 200 to 500 Kyats in order to cover the expenses of the Buddhist water festival

Colonel Tin Hlah assigned local block leader to collect money from the stores. They collected 500 Kyats from big stores and 200 to 300 Kyats from smaller stores. They built a stage and bought water festival uniforms with the money collected from the shops. They gave clothes for the water festival to single, elderly women and asked them to perform cultural dances, said a local residence.

The money collectors assigned by Colonel Tin Hlah visited one shop after another. While they were collecting money, one shop owner lady said, "I am not a Buddhist. I am a good Christian so I cannot give you money." One of the money collectors threatened her and told her to shut up and that it was ordered by the authorities.

Moreover, the people who participate in the Buddhist water festival are expected to purchase water festival uniforms but the local elderly encouraged residents not to participate because it could damage their own culture and religion. A majority of the residents of Hakha are Christian. Even though they tried to persuade people not to participate, people were threatened and ordered by the authorities to participate, a local resident reported to CHRO.

SPDC Force Local People to Sell Timber Planks at Unfair Price

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

28 July 2006. Colonel San Aung, commander of tactical command II for Southern Chin State, forced local people to sell him timber planks below fair market value in order to build a stage for the Matupi- Mintat road opening ceremony, one of the local people reported to CHRO.

The ceremony was celebrated on July 3, 2006. Beginning on June 18, 2006, 6 soldiers, including a commander, the immigration department, and the forestry department searched for timber planks to build the stage.

The victims and the quantities of timber planks taken are from Bal Dung (20 cubic feet) and Cakoek (15 cubic feet). They were paid only 2,000 -3,000 kyats. 150 cubic feet were also taken from other people under the justification that the timber was needed for the ceremony. In reality, however, only 50 cubic feet was used for the stage. The remaining planks were used for buildings in Tactical Hill, the local villager added.

Burmese Army Collect Rations From Villagers

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

6 August 2006. Second Warrant Officer Khin Maug Sing and his troops from LIB 16 staying temporarily in Lailen Pi Village, Matupi Township in Southern Chin State arrived in Lailen Te Village on 15 July 2006 and collected rations from the villagers. On the next morning, 6 villagers were forced to carry their rations up to Lailen Pi Army Camp, a local resident reported to CHRO.

During their stayed in Lailen Te Village the Army collected four chickens and 12 kilograms of rice from the villagers. The villagers did not receive any money for the chicken, rice, or wages for the portering, according to one of the porters. The officer also ordered thirty villagers to attend military training under threat of punishment.

Burmese Army Demand Chicken From Villagers

-- *Rhododendron News* July-August 2006

9 July 2006. Platoon Commander, Captain Aung Kyaw Thein from Light Infantry Battalion 355, based in Shinletwah Village, Paletwa Township, Southern Chin State, regularly collects five chickens every month from the surrounding villages for his troops in Shinletwah Camp, a local villager reported to CHRO.

Captain Aung Kyaw Thein told U Duhawma from Pathian Tlang Village to send chickens to the Shinletwah Army Camp on May 25, 2006, and also to collect five chickens from Pathian Tlang, Pintia, Hemate, Hemapi, Sia O, and Para Villages. When they collect chickens, it does not matter the number of houses in the village. They all have to give the same number of chicken. According to a local villager, the current price of chicken is 3,000 Kyats per chicken, and so 5 chickens cost 15,000 Kyats.

They started collecting chickens in the beginning of 2005. When they send chickens to the army camp, the villagers are not compensated for the chicken or the time spent

delivering the chickens, the local villager reported.

Police Arrest Cross-Border Trader And Confiscate Goods

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

26 July 2006. Police officer, Yay Chan, and his troops in Tidim Town, Northern Chin State arrested Lang Za Pau, accusing him of bringing illegal products into Saizaang Village on June 10, 2006. Lang Za Pau was carrying more than 300 packages of chewing nuts worth about 380,000,000 kyat, according to a merchant at the border.

The chewing nuts were imported from India. While transporting the nuts from Rih Town (2) to Kalaymyo by truck, the police officer and his troops arrested him in Sai Zang Village, Tidim Township. In addition, Cin Khan Lam, who lives near the location of the arrest, Zung Tang, the driver of the truck, and Do Vung Khan, the cargo handler, were also arrested along with the owner Lang Za Pau, who lives in Kalamyo. They were taken to Tidim Town.

Lang Za Pau will be charged under Temporary Act 51. Cin Khan Lam, Zung Tang, and Do Vung Khan will be charge under Temporary Act 53.

The chewing nut is called Zarda, which has 3 kinds, and is produced in India. There are 25 dozens in one packet. The nuts cost 420 Rupees in Aizawl, India and they sell for 26,000 kyats in Mandalay. This product has been imported into Burma since 2002 by the Rih- Haimual road.

SPDC Lieutenant Took 200,000 Kyats From A Woman Trader

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

9 July 2006. SPDC Lieutenant Commander Major Htay Aung from Light Infantry Battalion 266, based in Hakha Town, the capital of Chin State, and 15 soldiers threatened and took 200,000 Kyats from Daw Mang Iang, who was going to sell her goods, carried by 32 horses to Mizoram State of India, a woman trader who crossed the Indo-Burma border reported to CHRO.

Daw Mang Iang, and her group were crossing Nga Lang Village in Thantlang Township when they met SPDC soldiers on patrol. The Lieutenant Commander, Major Htay Aung, stopped them and threatened them with his gun saying, "You can't cross the border. You must follow us up to Vuangtu Camp, unless you give us 200,000 Kyats." Daw Mang Iang was frightened by their actions and tried to negotiate with them through the Chairman of the Village Council, but the Lieutenant Commander repeated that she must give him 200,000 Kyats. Finally, she gave him the money, as she had no other choice.

Daw Mang Iang is a resident of Cawng Thia Village, Thantlang Township and a mother of four children. She had borrowed 800,000 kyats from her relatives. She bought clothes and food from Mandalay and was on her way to trade the good in Mizoram to try to solve the financial difficulties of her family. Now she is upset at being threatened and having her money taken unfairly.

Burmese authorities extorting money from farmers in Chin State

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 13 December 2004

The director of land registry in Haka Township, Chin State, U Kya Maung has been demanding 5000 kyat per acre of farmland from local slash-and-burn farmers who are preparing to grow paddy and corn.

Those who refuse to pay are banned from cultivating in their own lands causing unnecessary problems for the poor farmers who have to depend on the lands for their survival.

A local resident told DVB that the authorities are also forcing the villagers to build a road for the junta without pay. They are being forced to break and carry stones used for the building of the road.

Deforestation in Chinland

-- *Rhododendron News*, March 1999

Since 1990, the Burmese military junta has rapidly extended its control over Burma's north-west region in Chinland and Sagaing Division. This expansion program has resulted in the establishment of over 20 new battalions of soldiers throughout this remote and mountainous areas. The principal outcomes of the increased military presence have been persecution and impoverishment of local population.

The North-Western command issued an order to its army battalions to collect food and anything they want from Chin civilians whenever they are in need. A villager said, "It is very difficult for us to feed thousands of these soldiers while we are being forced to be porters, laborers and treated like prisoners of war or slaves. We have no time to work for our own living. We have no regular income or earning. Moreover the soldier frequently collect forced contribution money for building pagodas, porters fees, any kind of festivals etc., or impose a fine for making up reasons. In the past decades we never lock the door at night. We could leave our house without being locked. We never lost our possessions. But today our belongings disappear within our twinkling eyes. I think, people will do anything to make money. If you don't have money to pay the soldiers, you would be punished. No one wants ill-treatment". The Chin people who have no alternative to make money are doing hunting animals (Tiger and Bear) and seeking wild orchids in the forest which for them is the only and an easiest way to make money. The existence of wild orchids in the forest is being pushed to extinction and the forest itself is rapidly

deteriorated. China's demand of forest products and wild animals is threatening the Chin forest and wild life.

CHRO interviewed Pu Ralkap (name changed),aged 20, from Leitak village, Thantlang township on December 3, 1998 regarding forestry bleakness caused by seeking wild orchids.

Q. In Chinland people are saying deforestation in recent year has been increased because of seeking wild orchids. Is there such happening in your areas? If so, when did you begin seeking ?

A. Yes! it started since 1993, till today.

Q. How did you collect them?

A. We climb up in the tree and pull them off which we can reach. If there are some which we can not reach, we cut the tree down and trim the branches off and collect the orchids. Where there are plenty of orchids, all the trees are smashed like elephants went through.

Q. Do the forest department prohibit doing this?

A. Yes! They prohibit only cutting trees. But it is not a very serious prohibition. How could we get them without cutting the trees! Since there is no Forest Department in our village, no one gets trouble with this Forest Law and Regulation so far.

Q. How do you sell them?

A. There are people who buy these orchids in Thantlang and Haka. So we carry them there and sell them to those buyers. The buyers then transported them to the merchants (smugglers) in Mandalay. And those merchants smuggled them to China. Probably, it is not useful in our own country. In 1993 it is worth Kyats 40 per 1-viss(about 1.5 kg). and went up about kyats 600 per viss in 1995. And now it is worth kyats 2,000 per viss. Ofcourse the price vary depending on the color of the orchids. Generally there are two kinds: white orchids and red orchids. They pay kyats1,700 per viss for white orchids and kyats 2,000 for red orchids.

Q. How much money you could make in a day by collecting these orchids?

A. We could make from kyats 400 to kyats 3,000 in a day.

Q. Is there any one hurt or died from searching these orchids in the forest?

A. Yes! there are not only hurt but also died from falling the tree. We heard that many people from different villages get injury.

Q. Do you mean other villages also doing the same, seeking wild orchids?.

A. Yes! people from different villages are doing collecting wild orchids. Some people even take risk to go to Kalaymyo area in seeking wild orchids. Before the price went up, we could go anywhere and collect them. But after the price went up we are no longer allowed to go to another place. The village elders forbid us to go to another village areas . We can do only within our own village area.

Q. Why do the elders prohibit it?

A. They know that our forest is going to be destroyed.

Q. Of what seasons these wild orchids are obtainable?

A. They have a very short life. From November until the end of January. The buyers want to buy only those that are from this period of time.

Q. Do you have any concern about caused by seeking wild orchids?

A. Yes! I am really concerned about it because I have seen destroyed and smashed the forest in our area. The forest is now turned into desolation. Soil erosion has also taken place which causes frighteningly the decreased of crops production . And it also raises environmental concern. No rain. Rivers and streams have almost dried up.

Q. Do you see any advantage?

A. There is an advantage in some way for the poor people like us. We have no earning or earning access. We could pay for some of the forced contribution money to the army and escape from punishment. But not all the time. And also we could buy some salt, cooking oil and medicine (basic necessities) with the money we get from selling wild orchids.

Compulsory (and frequently ruinous) cropping and marketing policies

[See also *Meeting with village headmen from Chin State*, above]

Government employees to plant Jetropha

-- *Khonumthung News*, 25 November 2006, via *Burma News International*

Government employees in Chin state Myanmar have been ordered to plant Jetropha in allotted areas. Labour wages for working in the plantations will range between Kyat 2000 to 3000.

Though the Myanmar authorities have ordered all employees to plant Jetropha, the employees who have no time to work in the plantations have hired workers to do their work for them in lieu of payment, an employee said.

A woman employee related to the project from Falam Township said, " I am pregnant and cannot do work at the plantation. That's why I called some workers to do my job for me and am paying them Kyat 1,500 a day. My salary is only Kyat 26,000 a month. I do not have much balance after I passed on the work to others."

A local said that "The authorities are not only forcing employees to plant Jetropha but also others. We cannot do our own job as a result."

Ironically even though the employees are paying the workers they have hired to do the plantation work at Kyat 1,500 per day, yet the authorities have been collecting Kyat 500 from each family for the Jetropha plantation.

This plantation project was started in April 2006 on the orders of Colonel Tin Hlah, the Tactical I commander of Chin State and Colonel Sang Aung. Since then SPDC government employees and local people have been working on the Jetropha plantation project.

Castor oil plantation project a problem for the people

-- *Khonumthung News*, 13 April 2006 via *BurmaNet News*

The military regime's Castor oil plantation project is creating a major problem for the people in North-western Burma. The military government's insistence that people be involved in such plantations will give them no time to eke out their livelihood.

Reports received indicate that the people and government servants have been ordered to collect the bio diesel producing six inches high Castor oil plant. Colonel Tin Hlah issued the order, according to sources.

Each household has been ordered to find 1,200 Castor oil plants. Failure to comply with the order will result in buying four kilograms of the plant's seed from the army. A kilogram of the seed costs 1,000 kyats, a villager told Khonumthung on the Indo-Burma border.

"Skills related to Castor oil plantation has been taught in public meetings," says a villager from Thantlang Township. Colonel San Aung also ordered the planting of castro oil in old jhum areas in southern Chin state.

The villagers have been directed to plant Castor oil over a two-acre area in Rizua township, said a villager. About 1,000 plants are to be planted over the two-acre area. The authorities in southern Chin state have not fixed the cost of the seeds and Castor oil plants in nurseries.

The government servants including United Solidarity Development Association (USDA) of Rizua and the people of Indo-Burma border area have to buy the seeds from the military authorities as Castor oil plants found in the forests will not be sufficient to fulfill the demand of the military regime.

"Castor oil plantation will take up all the time and there will be no time left for other work needed to be done for subsistence. Castor oil has to be planted alongside the road,

where the authorities can see. Yet the fertility of the soil for the plantation has not been tested. The project will not succeed," said a villager in Rizua.

SPDC authorities have stated that the Castor oil plantation project will not benefit the authority but the people of Chin state.

The military regime had once started a project called "Chin state as Tea state" which was a complete failure. The authorities initiated the bio-diesel producing Castor oil plantation project again in 2006.

Land Confiscation Continues For Jathropas Plantation

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

12 August 2006: In an all out bid to transform Chin state to a bio-gas producing state, the military junta continues to confiscate farmland to convert it to jathropas plantations.

According to late reports Mr. Zaw Win Htay, Falam Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) Chairman, confiscated farmland (jhum) in Lungrang and Lungpi villages of Falam Township, Chin state, Burma in the second week of July. The confiscated land was estimated to be around 80 acres, situated in the Indo-Burma trade route between Falam and Rih towns.

Some areas of the farmland were reportedly confiscated for tea plantation and Jathropas will be collectively planted in the confiscated land. This farmland was reserved for the villagers for Jhum cultivation, sources said.

"We are not sure whether to stay or migrate. We will not be able to survive without food if the authorities force us to stop farming. We might be forced to migrate," a villager said.

The Indo-Burma trade route passes through Lungrang and Lungpi villages and Lungpi-Gangaw highway was initiated by SPDC. The Lungrang and Lungpi village areas have been reportedly proclaimed as 'Special Area Zone' by the Burmese authorities.

The authorities confiscated eight acres of farmland belonging to Pastor Rev. Khup Hlei Thang, Bomba village, Falam Township in May. It is common in Chin state for the authorities to confiscate farmland of the people for tea and Jathropas plantations without paying a Kyat in compensation.

Death Sentence To People Opposing Jathropa Plantation

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

26 July 2006: The Burmese military authorities have warned people that it would award

the death sentence to anyone who speaks about the drawbacks of Jathropa plantations in Chin state.

In the first week of July, the Tactical I commander of Chin state, Colonel Tin Hlah warned about awarding the death sentence to people critical of Jathropa plantations. The commander of Tactical I in Hakha, the capital of Chin state issued this warning during his official visit to Thantlang.

Col. Tin Hlah cautioned the people during a government inter-departmental meeting during his visit. The Colonel reportedly does not entertain any talk about the plantation's success or failure.

A Thantlang villager told Khonumthung, "The officer regards a Jathropa tree more precious than human life."

Jathropa has been forcibly planted by confiscation of land, five miles from Thantlang town since 2005. The people are forced to work in this plantation at least three times a week, sources in Thantlang added.

A farmer said, "June, July and August are hectic months for people working in the fields. The authorities force us to work in the Jathropa plantations even during these months. Nobody dares to oppose forced labour."

Meanwhile, some people opined that it is because the State Peace and Development Council wants all the people to work in the plantations that they have warned of awarding the death sentence to those against it.

This is the first ever death warrant to the people against the plantation of Jathropa in Chinland.

SPDC Re-Issues Order For Castor Oil Plantation

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

9 August 2006. Company Commander Captain Pyi Ngiang from Vuangtu Village Light Infantry Battalion 266 based in Hakha, Northern Chin State ordered villages under his control to plant a one acre castor oil plantation and arrange the seeds to form a fence before the end of June 2006, a local resident who preferred to remain anonymous reported to CHRO.

According to the order, the villagers were forced to obtain castor seed from Mizoram in India. At minimum, they had to plant 50 full milk tin cups. On 20 June 2006 the Land Department went to the village to check that the order had been completed and record the amount of acreage. However, they realized the project was not successful, said a local resident.

Police Officer U Uk Hlei and a member of the Township Peace and Development Council ordered each household to plant another 1000 plants. Moreover, he issued a new compulsory order of a school quota, requiring every primary school in Thantlang Township to plant four full kilograms of castor seed in four acres, the headmaster of the primary school reported to CHRO.

Every villager in Thantlang Township, including farmers, civil servants, pastors, widows, and single mothers, are forced to participate in the castor oil project. Now is the busy time of the year for cultivating the paddy fields and other types of farm work. However, the farmers do not have time for their own work because they are forced to work on the castor plantation. They are too afraid to not comply with the order, a villager reported to CHRO.

Militarization

Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christians in Burma,

-- Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), February 2004

“Since the 1990s there has been an increase in militarization within Chin State. This has been due to the formation of the Chin National Front (CNF) following the 1988 nationwide pro-democracy uprising. The CNF is an armed opposition group whose aims included fighting for the restoration of democracy in Burma and Chin self determination. On the pretext of fighting CNF opposition, the SPDC military has increased its army presence in Chin State, from one battalion prior to 1988 to at least 12 active battalions in the area at the beginning of 2004.”

[...]

A direct result of the increased militarization of Chin State has been an increase in human rights abuses. Civilians are used as forced labor in the building and maintenance of military camps, on road construction projects and as porters for the army. Further human rights abuses in Chin State include excessive taxation, the destruction of houses and places of worship, the confiscation of land, food and livestock, arbitrary arrest, torture and extra-judicial execution. The demands for forced labor, food and money, as well as the risks to one's personal safety, has led many people to flee their homes in search of safer areas in which they can adequately provide for both themselves and their families.”

Village Headman Killed, Two Forcibly Recruited As Soldiers

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

13 July 2006: A village headman in southern Chin state, Burma was killed in June by Burmese soldiers for his failure to report the presence of an armed group in the area. The headman of King Kang Kung village, Lawng Zaw Kung tract, Paletwa Township, Chin state, Andry (40), was kidnapped and killed by Burmese soldiers in the last week of June. He was abducted and killed by the Burmese Army's Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 140 for failing to report the presence of the Chin National Army (CNA) in the area to the authorities, said sources.

Village headmen of King Kang Kung, Pin Kung, Sa Khi Ha and Lawng Zaw Kung villages were arrested and taken to Matupi town, for interrogation regarding the movement of the CNA in the region. Andry was killed on the way to Matupi town. The exact date and reason for his murder could not be established.

Andry was murdered in cold blood in Kaisi Mountain, near Matupi town. The other headmen cannot be contacted because they are in army custody, said a source.

The commander of LIB 140, Captain Aung Kyaw had apprehended Mr. Nga Vang (36) the headman of Khua Hung village and Mr. Maung Hlah (25) the secretary of Khua Hung, who was sent to deliver a message to the headman of La Lui village, in the second week of June. The duo has been taken to Pakkoku by the troops.

The Burmese Army has threatened to imprison those detained. They have, however, been given the option of joining the army. The apprehended village authorities of Khua Hung. Mr. Nga Vang and Mr. Maung Hlah reportedly chose to join the army to avoid a long prison term.

A Matupi villager told Khonumthung, "The Burmese Army has never taken such excessive action against the people in previous years. This has happened due to the movement of the CNA in the region. It could have been revenge for the Matupi Football Match Tragedy by the Tactical II Commander, Colonel San Aung."

Various headmen were arrested by the Burmese Army after the presence of the CNA in the region was reported in the last week of May. The Burmese authorities reportedly accused the people of supporting the CNA in their movement for the restoration of democracy in Burma. The headmen were apprehended for not reporting the presence of CNA.

The Burmese Army had killed the headman of Tiphul village in May in connection with the presence of CNA in Hakha Township.

Villagers Forced To Attend Two Months Military Training

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

7 July 2006: Second commander of Burma army Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 550 from Pon-na Island, Arakan State stationed in Shinletwa Village, Paletwa Township, Southern

Chin State, ordered 9 villages under his control to send 30 villagers from each village to attend two months of military training from September to October, according to a local man who wishes to remain anonymous.

Starting on June 23, 2006, the headmen from each village began selecting the trainees in accordance with the order. The villages forced to participate in the training are: Para, Sia O, Pathiantlang, Ma Oo, Wa Zong, Sin Oo Wa, Shwe Le Wa, Kung Pyin, Shinlewa. Altogether 210 persons will be attending the military training.

During the trainee registration process, each trainee had to provide their name, names of their parents, their ID number, occupation, race, and religion. The chairman of the Township Peace and Development Council had to send the registration lists to the Shinlewa Battalion before June 27, 2006. The selected villagers must report to Shinlewa Battalion to have passport-sized photos taken, which will be sent to the main office.

The reason for the training provided by the commander was to ensure security for the village, the battalion and other camps, and also to assist the SPDC militarily. The village council was informed that they would have to bear the cost of the training, including the uniforms bear. Following the order, villagers have fled to India fearing increased military operations and abuses in the area, said a local villager.

Local Residents Forced To Take Militia Training

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

7 August 2006. Colonel San Aung, commander of Tactical Command II for Southern Chin State based in Matupi Town, issued an order requiring three villages from the southeast region of Matupi Township to send 30 persons per village to attend militia training, a local resident reported to CHRO.

The order was issued on 20 July through the company commander based in Lai Len Pi Village. Chairmen of the village council were ordered to select the trainees. The names of the impacted villages are: Lai Len Pi, Lai Len Te, and Aru. Each village sent 30 trainees. In total 90 people were sent to attend the militia training.

The villagers were forced to leave behind their farms and were unable to cultivate their crops. However, they dared not refuse the order fearing persecution.

Discrimination

Carrying the Cross

-- Christian Solidarity Worldwide, February 2007, pp. 36, 37

In Chin State, it has become, according to Chins interviewed by Christian Solidarity Worldwide, “almost impossible” to build a church or church building. Instead, the regime has been systematically destroying churches and crosses, which the Chins have traditionally built on hilltops and road-sides as a symbol of their faith. According to Salai Bawi Lian Mang, “destruction of crosses started around the early 1990s with the rapid increase in army battalions established across Chin State. Since then, almost every cross in all the nine townships in Chin State has been destroyed by the regime

... Many of them have been replaced with Buddhist pagodas and statues of Buddhist monks.”¹²⁷

Throughout the 1990s, construction or renovation of many churches was forbidden, ¹²⁸ including:...

In addition to the destruction of crosses and churches, and restrictions on the construction of new churches, the SPDC regularly and deliberately disrupts church services, physically assaults pastors and church leaders, and uses pastors for forced labour, particularly on Sundays. According to the Chin Human Rights Organisation, “in some instances, pastors, evangelists and missionaries have been abducted, tortured and even killed by the Burmese soldiers.”...

The Chin are facing cultural genocide, not only in terms of direct religious discrimination and persecution, but also as a result of an insidious campaign by the SPDC to undermine the fabric of Chin society. Traditionally, Chin Christians do not approve of drinking alcohol and have taken a very conservative view of the use of alcohol. To undermine this, since 1992, the SPDC has brought in large quantities of a liquor known as “O.B”, a mix of methyl and ethyl alcohol, from Rangoon. Medical experts assess that such crude alcohol would be completely forbidden in the West. Not only is it highly addictive, it is also extremely toxic. This is sold on the streets, especially on Sundays, to young people. Boys and girls as young as 12 years old have been sold the alcohol by the army and the police. An ‘OB’ bottle sells for 1,000 kyat (US\$0.79). Addiction leads to crime – people steal in order to feed their addiction – and ultimately possibly to death. The medical effects include toxic liver failure, jaundice and damage to brain cells. In 2003, in one town of 5,000 people, there were at least ten deaths as a result of alcohol consumption. It has created, as one Chin Christian put it, “the breakdown of body, mind, spirit and society”, affecting church attendance by children, adolescents and young couples. “Before 1988, you would never see a Chin woman drunk,” said one Chin. “It is a shameful thing for a Chin woman to drink and smoke. But now there has been a real increase in drunkenness among Chin women.” When people become too drunk, the SPDC arrests them, and requires a 5,000 kyat (US\$3.95) bail for their release...

Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christians in Burma

-- Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), February 2004

Many Chins have fled Burma – to India, Malaysia, the United States, Canada, Australia and elsewhere. Some have fled because of religious persecution. Pastor Satin Lal, for example, left Burma in 2000. “The final point that made me leave the country was, I was trying to build the church and the government did not like that. We went on building the church and I was threatened to be arrested. Instead of being arrested and put in prison, I’d rather leave the country,” Satin Lal told Project Maje. Christianity, he added, is perceived by the SPDC to be a Western religion and for that reason Christians, particularly pastors, are regarded as “the number one enemy of the State.

Significantly, an estimated 90% of Chins are Christian and widespread religious persecution has also contributed to the Chin IDP and refugee populations. In conjunction with an increase in military presence in Chin State, Buddhist monks have also been dispatched throughout Chin State as part of the "Hill Regions Buddhist Mission". These monks, who reportedly hold more power than local army commanders, seek to coerce local residents into converting to Buddhism. Coercive techniques reportedly include subjecting only the Christian population to demands for forced labor and taxation while giving those who "choose" to convert to Buddhism numerous incentives, including monthly stipends, food rations and access to education. The policies of discrimination based on religious identity adopted within Chin State have led CHRO to go so far as to argue that the SPDC is actively attempting to inflict ethnocide on the Chin people. For those who refuse to convert to Buddhism, fleeing their homes to live as IDPs is often the only way to survive.

Fifty Households To Be Evicted For Monastery Expansion

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

29 August 2006: In yet another instance of brute oppression, the military junta is set to deprive 50 households of their land for the expansion of a monastery in the northwest capital of Chin State in Myanmar.

According to local people, the commander of Tactical (1) Colonel Tin Hla directed the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) in July to acquire houses in the heart of Hakha, Chin State near the monastery. Even though the authorities are yet to inform to people regarding where to shift and how, the land owners and heads of the local community facing eviction met the Commander of Tactical (1) on August 16, seeking that he reconsider his decision.

The military authorities intend to drive away the owners of the houses situated on the upper road of the highway from Hakha to Kan Gaw.

The authorities built the Buddhist monastery at a place which is very crowded and a market area about 45 years ago. Now they are planning to take over five concrete buildings and small houses.

“The authorities will take over some of the houses and the land which are vacant in the town. But they will never pay compensation or provide some relief in terms of money to the owners” said a local in Hakha.

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) started construction of Buddhist pagodas and monasteries around Chin state and at the same time they deprived local people of land and homes.

Land Confiscated For Buddhist Monastery

-- *Rhododendron News*, July-August 2006

25 July 2006: The military junta in Burma has confiscated land for the construction of a Buddhist monastery in Chin state bordering Sagaing Division.

About 13 acres of land (40 blocks) was confiscated in Tedim Township, Chin state bordering Kalay Myo Town, Sagaing Division for the construction of a Buddhist monastery-cum-orphanage. The confiscated land is situated in Chin state's Khai Kam border village and is also called Koe Mai or Tai Kua, and is nine miles from Kalay Myo town. The military government issued an order for confiscation of the land and construction of the monastery-cum-orphanage in January 2006, in keeping with the wishes of the Buddhist Mission. No compensation was paid to the owners of the land, our sources in Kalay Myo said. A land owner told Khonumthung, “My family is not the only one losing land, however, I feel bad as it is an extension of Buddhist land.” The monastery-cum-orphanage will be built under the patronage of Colonel Aung Myo Myint.

The land confiscated is adjacent to Kalay University, in Chin state. Different kinds of education are imparted in the monastery-cum-orphanage in accordance with Buddhist teachings. Various Chin orphans have been reportedly admitted to this monastery-cum-orphanage. Many Chin youths have also reportedly sought work in the monastery-cum-orphanage. The orphans and workers of the monastery-cum-orphanage have to convert to Buddhism prior to admission to the institution.

SPDC Commander Justify His Barbaric Action

-- *Rhododendron News*, May-June 2005

18 June 2005. Aizawl: During the public meeting called by the Burmese military authority in Matupi town, Colonel San Aung, the commander of Burmese army tactical II announced that he has the authority to abolish any symbols, building, monuments

including Christian symbol in public. The meeting was attended by various government departments and several village headmen.

Colonel San Aung called this meeting to justify what he has done to the Chin Christians in Matupi town. He is responsible for ordering the dismantling of two Christian cross in Matupi and confiscation and razing dawn of at least 20 houses without compensation in Matupi.

A person (name withheld for security reason) who participate in the meeting report to CHRO that the colonel was furious about the radio reports of his action, especially dismantling of a giant Christian cross at Boltlang, by Washington DC based Radio Free Asia and the Voice of America, along with Oslo based Democratic Voice of Burma which was broadcast in Burmese. The colonel has reportedly said that “I have the power to destroy any symbols and monuments except General Aung San, for the betterment of the people”.

When the Colonel ordered to dismantle a giant Christian cross in Boltlang of Matupi town in January 3, the Chin people around the world have fiercely condemned by staging demonstration in various SPDC embassy around the world including the demonstration in front of the SPDC embassy in Kuala Lumpur that results in the arrest of several demonstrators by the Malaysian authority.

Chin Christians around the world and have also observed international day of prayer for persecution of Chin Christians by the Burmese military regime. These incidents were covered by several international news agency including the Voice of America, Radio Free Asia and Democratic Voice of Burma.

A person who reports the incident to CHRO added that this is the SPDC way of justifying what they have miserably done to the people.