

NMSP: BURMESE ARMY AND KAREN BGF BREACH NCA



December 5, 2019

HURFOM: On November 27, 2019, the Burmese army and the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) attacked the New Mon State Party (NMSP) military base

in Japanese Well village, near the Three Pagodas Pass area at the Thai-Burma border. The armed forces took control of the base and village. In order to resolve the conflict, the NMSP is submitting a report to the Joint

Monitoring Committee-Union (JMC-U) and the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC), according to a source from the NMSP.

"Regarding the armed conflict, we've been planning to report to the JMC-U. Then, we'll also try to meet with officials from NRPC. We hope they can help us in solving the current problem," said Nai Win Hla, a member of NMSP Central Executive Committee.

The NMSP met with Mawlamyine-based Southeast Military Command on December 2 and discussed the Japanese Well situation. General Secretary Nai Aung Min, CEC member Nai Win Hlan and Colonel Nai Han Thar of the NMSP met with Colonel Maung Maung Latt of the Southeast Command but no concrete agreement was reached.

"We met today to discuss about what is happening in the Japanese Well base. We [tried to find a way to] negotiate

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THE 71ST INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY STATEMENT BY HURFOM



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CLASH BETWEEN KNU AND NMSP INJURES CIVILIANS; HOUSES AND SHOPS DESTROYED



Photo:MNA

October 22, 2019

HURFOM: In the early morning of October 17, 2019, violence broke out between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Karen National Union (KNU). KNU's soldiers attacked a NMSP camp based in Ma Yan Chaung village

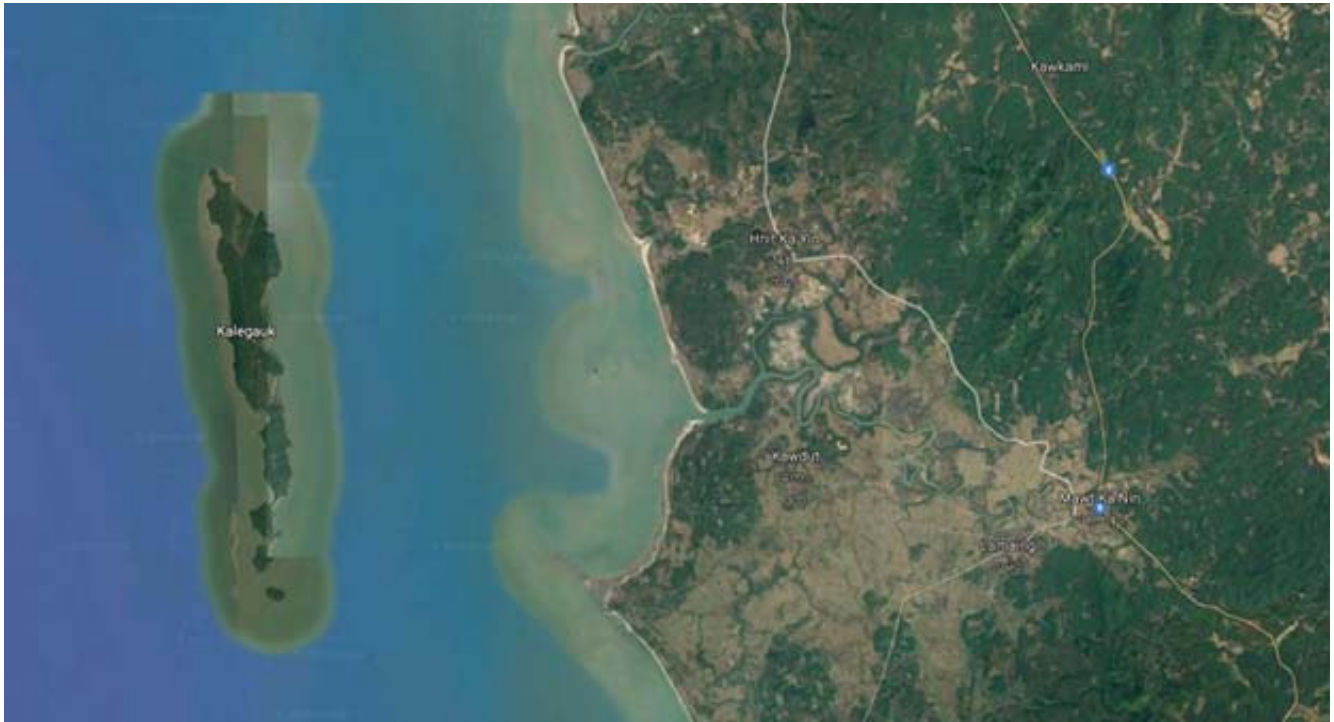
in Ye Chaung Pyar and a camp based in Phalae Don Pheik in Three Pagodas Pass Township.

Nai Hongsar, the vice-chair of the NMSP provided some background to the outbreak of violence. *"There is a territory dispute. The KNU set its flag on the NMSP's controlled area, in the Phalae Don Pheik village. [The] NMSP had discussed [the issue of who controlled the area] with the KNU long ago. In the end, as [an agreement could not be made], the NMSP removed their flag and sent it back to the KNU on 16*

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News

MON STATE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO BUILD DEEP SEAPORT AT KALAGOKE ISLAND



December 3, 2019

HURFOM: The Surbana Jurong Group from Singapore launched their “Mon State Investment Affair 2019” at the Strand Hotel in Mawlamyine on the 29th and 30th of November, with the support of the Mon state government.

The topics of discussion included investment potential in , agriculture, fishery, deep-seaport, oil and natural gas, eco-tourism, real estate and construction as part of the “The Mon State Vision Master Plan 2035”.

The Chief Minister of Mon State, Dr. Aye Zan told the media that a deep-seaport is part of the strategic project plan and will be built in Kalagote island in La Mein sub-township, Ye township, Mon state.

“Kyaik Kha Mi waters are 8-meters in depth. Ships carrying between 10,000 and 15,000 tons can sail in 8-meters. There is less [depth of water] in Yangon. The water depth is 18 meters to 23 meters in Kalagote island. Our country will [benefit from this] development if we could build the deep-seaport there. Whether it is for rice or other things, Kalagote island is the main place for any trade,” said Dr. Aye Zan.

Information presented at the investment affair showed that the strategic plan is designed to address the needs and policies of Mon State and has been drafted with inputs from local organizations and Mon State authorities.

“The state and local governments are inviting new investments to achieve

state policies and missions. For local development, Mon state needs to invite the investment in local areas,” continued the Chief Minister.

According to one young person, local people of Kalagote island are not well informed of the deep-seaport plans.

“We saw some people did a land survey last year. But we didn’t know who they were. Some people said it is for a deep-seaport. There will be a huge hardship for the fishing community if a deep-seaport is built. Some villagers (who don’t understand the impact) think there are benefits when the company comes,” said the youth.

According to the Chief Minister, In Mon State, there have been 80 investment grants made up to November 2019 and the USD dollar value totals \$5,743.980.

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NMSP: BURMESE ARMY AND KAREN BGF BREACH NCA



and settle the problem. (But) we didn't get an agreement," said Nai Win Hla.

According to the NMSP, the Japanese Well military base is an official recognized permanent base according to both 2012 State and Union Level Ceasefire Agreement and the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) that was signed by the NMSP in 2018.

During the meeting with the Southeast Command on December 2, the NMSP requested the Burmese army to

withdraw their forces from the Japanese Well base.

"According to our experience, it's a bit difficult (to regain control of the base). I don't think withdrawal happens easily. In 2017, the Burmese army invaded our bases and haven't [to this day] withdrawn from those bases. This conflict may be similar to those previous ones. But [in those cases] we had not yet signed the NCA. Now we have signed the NCA and it depends on them (the Burmese army) to respect

protocols and agreement and to withdraw the base," continued Nai Win Hla.

In 2017, the Burmese army invaded two NMSP bases – Zee Hna Pin and Hpa Yar Taung check points located beside Thanbyuzayat-Three Pagodas Pass road and the army maintains control of these bases today.

Nai Win Hal claimed that the Burmese army and the Karen BGF breached Section 8(B), Chapter (3) of NCA, which defines the terms for movement of armed troops in the areas controlled by other ethnic armed groups, is allowed only after obtaining prior agreement.

"They reported to us that they wanted to observe the Thai-Burma border. The local officials reported to us and we allowed the request. But they couldn't wait till the official order reached the local officials and then they invaded (our controlled area). So an armed clash broke out. Their actions breached the NCA," said Nai Win Hla.

Since the Burmese army and the Karen BGF control the Japanese Well village, approximately 900 local villagers fled their homes and have taken shelter on the Thai side of the border.

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CLASH BETWEEN KNU AND NMSP INJURES CIVILIANS; HOUSES AND SHOPS DESTROYED



October 2019. They were not satisfied and attacked," explained Nai Hongsar.

As a result, Phalae Don Pheik villagers had to flee from their homes and a number of shops were destroyed. Villagers later discovered their belongings, gold, and money were also stolen. Due to the displacement of the villagers, HURFOM has not yet been

able to gather further details about the robberies and destruction of property.

"Due to the fighting, while villagers were running off, one woman and her baby were grabbed (by a KNU soldier) and he shot a gun near their ears. And the baby fell down from his mother. Now, both mother and baby got a sudden hearing loss and also got frightened," reported a health activist working on the Thai-Myanmar border.

A deputy company commander of Phalae Don Pheik NMSP was killed during the fighting.

"(KNU) made attacks at two places at the same time. Mainly, it was due to a territory [dispute]. They said it is their

territory but NMSP said it is theirs. The conflict arose from this and now fighting has happened," stated Nai Nyan Htun, the Chairman of the Tavoy district of the NMSP.

Nai Nyan Htun added that the leaders from the two sides will attempt to negotiate a resolution.

"This occurred at the ground level. To prevent the recurrence, we must have a negotiation at the district level. So today (October 18) we are traveling to Three Pagodas Pass to meet with the KNU officials [who] arrived there yesterday. We need to negotiate an agreement. But we don't [yet] have a plan to report this issue to the Mon State Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC-S)," said Nai Hongsar, vice-chair of NMSP.

News

MON TEACHERS INSTRUCTED NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS



October 7, 2019

HURFOM: Teachers appointed for Mon language teaching in government schools in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon state, were warned not to become involved in political issues by Deputy Chief Officer of Kyaikmayaw Township Department of Basic Education, according to a Mon language teacher.

Last week, Deputy Chief Officer U Aung Naing Oo, instructed Mon teachers to stay away from politics. The directive was made during a staff gathering at the Township's education department as they waited for their monthly salary disbursements.

"You all are using Unicode font now so your posts and comments (in social media/ Facebook) can be read (monitored by the government). [Anyone] involved in political issues can't hide. Therefore, you all must stay away from politics. Don't involve [yourself] in it. As you all are government staff, you can't do politics," said the Deputy Chief Officer, according to one of the Mon teachers.

There are over 100 language teachers assigned for the Mon language and 20 teaching assistants in Kyaikmayaw Township.

"I don't know if all school teachers are [being] pressured not to be involved in politics. Though we are government staff, most of us are providing support to Mon literature and culture and Mon national affairs so I think, the instruction may be a warning to us. He told us that so we need to be cautious now. [Most Mon teachers] are involved in Mon affairs so we are a bit

afraid of being monitored and punished," continued the teacher.

According to some teachers, there is not a friendly relationship between government teachers and Mon teachers. In the 2017-18 academic year, the principal hid the chalk box during Mon language class so the Ethnic Affair Committee had to step in to solve that problem.

"Learning [ones mother tongue] language and [being] involved in national affairs could not be banned. Everybody will work for the development of his/her nationals. You can inform Ethnic Affair Committee if there is a prohibition," stated Nai Mon Rajar, a Mon representative of Ethnic Affair Committee.

In the 2019-20 academic year, the Ministry of Education and Ethnic Affairs Committee appointed 340 teaching assistants in Mon state and of the 340 teaching assistants, 171 will be dedicated to Mon language instruction, 148 for Karen language and 21 for the Pa'O language, confirmed U Saw Aung Myint Khine, from the Karen Ethnic Affairs Minister of Mon State government.

ARMED CLASHES CONTINUE DESPITE NEGOTIATION. SCHOOLS CLOSED AND VILLAGERS FLEE HOMES



October 25, 2019

HURFOM: In the third week of October, 2019, there were 3 armed clashes between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Karen National Union (KNU).

On October 17, 2019, two clashes took place in the early morning. One was at the NMSP base nearby Ma Yan Chaung, Ye Chaung Phyar Region, Ye Township, Mon State, and the other at the NMSP base nearby Phalae Don Phike village, Three Pagodas Pass, Kyarinnseiky Township, Karen State. On October 23, the KNU battled with the NMSP nearby Ngar Kalay Chaung village, Kyaung Ywar village track, Ye Township.

The armed clashes forced schools to close and villagers fled from their homes. The Mon National High School at Win Kabar village, Kyarinnseiky Township, a school at Phalae Don Phike village and schools at Min Hla or Lake Pote village and at Ngar Kalay Chaung village have closed due to security concerns.

"...parents have been worrying about their children so they withdrew them

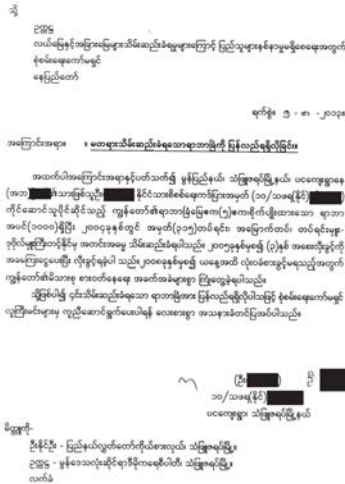
from the school. The school teachers had to close the school. We don't know when the school will reopen. It depends on the situation between the Mon and Karen," said a parent from Mudon whose child attends the Win Kabar Mon National High School.

There were also arbitrary arrests, detentions and other human rights violations in the conflict areas.

"KNU arrested pedestrians and villagers who went to their plantations. They arrested 12 villagers and 7 of them were tied with ropes. And they were detained at a nearby plantation. We requested the village Administrator and village prominent persons to find them. We found them about 2 pm. As the Administrator requested the KNU release them [which they did]. Both Mon and Karen villagers were

News

VILLAGERS HOPE CONFISCATED LANDS, BY MILITARY WILL BE RETURNED TO RIGHTFUL OWNERS.



October 17, 2019

HURFOM: On May 5, 2016, the President's Office formed the Central Committee for Scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands. One of the duties of the committee is to return unused, confiscated lands to the original owners.

Villagers in Thanbyuzayat Township from Mon State who had lands confiscated by the local battalion have been waiting for this committee to solve their land dispute.

One Pa Nga resident who lost a 5-acre rubber plantation to the Burma Artillery Regiment Command No. 315 (ARC No.315) said, *"After my plantation was seized, I had to work (as a daily laborer) at other plantations. I can't feed my stomach full. As soon as my plantation was confiscated, I couldn't sleep well. I was deeply depressed. I had to try a lot to recover from the situation. After I reported [what happened] to the committee, they said [they were working to solve] the land disputes [in the whole country]. So I hope [one day] the committee will also solve my land dispute."*

The villager tended to about 1,000 rubber plants on his 5-acre plantation before the local army confiscated the plantation in 2005. The army did allow the owner to work in his plantation after paying a tax to them. However, in 2008, the army denied the villager a work permit and fully confiscated the plantation.

"Regarding land confiscation, I submitted reports (to particular departments or committees) several times. The land committee never called us. They never came to meet with us. I submitted reports so I hoped they would come to meet us. Now, the army

chopped down the old rubber plants and substituted with new ones. But no one came to help us. Now we heard that the committee came to investigate the land disputes and we had a chance to get back our plantations. But in reality, we're the ones who have to suffer the loss," said the villager.

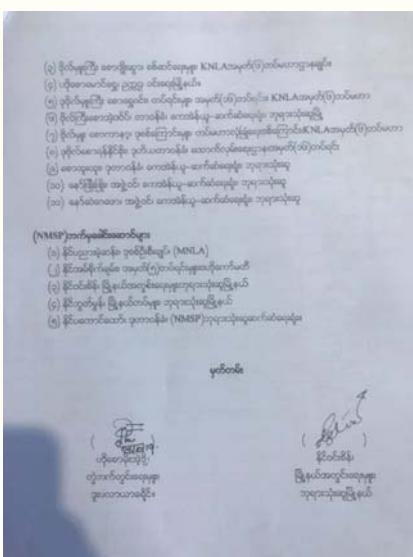
Plantation owners began submitting reports to the authorities dating back to 2013 but they have not received any remedy to date.

"We didn't complain if the army confiscated the plantation for [the] battalions expansion. But now they confiscated the land and sold them to other [villagers]. They did that under my very eyes. Is it fair for me to suffer this kind of pain?" asked the villager.

Nearby the ARC No. 315, there are 400 acres of rubber plantations owned by 57 local farmers and the local army has confiscated all the plantations.

"We didn't complain if the army confiscated the plantation for [the] battalions expansion. But now they confiscated the land and sold them to other [villagers]. They did that under my very eyes. Is it fair for me to suffer this kind of pain"

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included in the arrests," said the Min Hla resident.

A few hours after the release, local villagers heard gunshots coming from the NMSP base nearby Ngar Kalay Chaung village.

"We don't know how the armed clash started. A Mon soldier was killed in the battle. At the moment, the whole (Ngar Kalay Chaung) village were moved to Kyaung Ywar village," said a local resident.

Due to security concerns, the villagers abandoned their homes and plantations and took shelter at nearby villages and a monastery. Houses and shops left empty were robbed and destroyed by the

KNU soldiers. A mother and child from Phalae Don Phike village suffered hearing injuries when a gun was fired near their ears.

During the October 17th armed clash, a Lieutenant Deputy Company Commander was killed and two villagers were injured by landmines.

The NMSP and the KNU held negotiations on October 20th and 23rd. Despite a joint agreement to stop the armed clashes, there have been fights at the ground level.

Efforts to contact officials from the NMSP and the KNU by HURFOM for up-to-date comments, have been unsuccessful at the time of publication.

News

MON STATE ELECTION SUB-COMMISSION NEEDS UNION COMMISSION APPROVAL TO COLLECT LIST OF MILITARY VOTERS



Photo: VOA

October 22, 2019

HURFOM: As of the first week of October, 2019, more than 1.7 million people have been added to the 2020 general election voter list in Mon State. Now the Mon State Election Sub-commission is awaiting approval from the Union Election Commission to start the collection of military voters' to the list.

"We can collect the list of soldiers and their household members only after we [have] received instructions from the Union Election Commission. Now we [have collected the non-military voters names across Mon State] but can't collect the list of military voters. The whole country is like that (can't collect list of military voters). We need instructions from the Union Election Commission to list military

voters," said U Hein Lin Htet, the Deputy Director of Mon State Election Sub-commission.

The background to this process situation is linked to election laws and the desire for free and fair elections.

According to election laws, the voter lists of soldiers and their household members must be present at the polling stations in the wards nearby particular military commands. However, election laws do not state polling stations could be on military bases.

In the 2015 general election, there was an attempted negotiation to remove polling stations from military bases, but no agreement was reached. As a result a non-military eligible voters lists is compiled first, and then military voters are added to that list.

U Hein Lin Htet explained that during the 2015 election, monitoring groups, election candidates and media groups could freely monitor polling stations on military bases like they did at stations in civilian awards. Further that most military polling stations were located at government schools and common halls on military bases.

However, the Central Executive Committee of the National League for Democracy (NLD) opposed placing polling stations being set up on military bases as well as advance voting by military voters, reported U Ngwe Myint, the Secretary of the Mon State NLD Office.

U Myint Naing, Spokesperson from the Union Election Commission (UEC), noted that placing polling stations on military bases remains a controversial issue, and the (UEC) still needs to have a discussion with military officials about the matter.

"In the recent central committee meeting, we decided to submit a report to the Union Election Commission [urging them] not to place polling stations in military bases. Voting in military bases isn't free and fair," said U Ngwe Myint of the NLD.

In the 2015 general election, there were 919 polling stations in Mon State and 49 were military polling stations, according to the Mon State Election Sub-commission

KIDNAPPING AND EXTORTION CRIME ENDS IN DEATH OF YOUNG CHILD IN YE TOWNSHIP



November 26, 2019

HURFOM: A child, just under two years of age, was abducted and killed on 18 November 2019 according to sources within the police department in Ye. The incident took place in the Old City Quarter, Ah Sin village tract, Ye Township, Mon state.

Mg Ye Yint Thu, 20, and Mg Ye Yint Myo, 16, from Sai Pyin village, Bu Talin Township, Oak Chin Twin District, Sagaing Division, kidnapped (abducted)

the child to extort money from the parents. Both culprits worked at a fishery owned by the child's parents, U Phoe Sal and Daw Thin Thin Aye.

"The mother of the (culprits) is a friend with the child's father and they had been there only one month working for him. The child was abducted while the mother was taking a nap at noon and a phone was also stolen," said the police chief of Ye police station.

When the mother awoke, she looked for her baby. A taxi driver told her that two brothers were seen with the child headed towards the railway station, but could not be found there.

The culprits phoned the father at 6:00 pm and said *"to bring 500,000 kyat to*

exchange for the child and [that they would] do something bad if [the parents did not pay] because they're impatient". The parents contacted the police station after receiving the phone call.

The culprits were caught at the bus station at midnight after attempting to obtain a Wave money transfer of 300,000 kyat sent from the parents. At the arrest, there was no sign of the child.

The culprits admitted that, Mg Ye Yint Thu, had closed the child's mouth as she was crying loudly. The child died of suffocation. At approximately 4pm on the 19th, the body of the child was found in a canal near a field behind the railway road in Chaung Taung village, according to the police.

The police in Ye Town are trying the two brothers in court for child abduction, intimidation, murder and theft.

News

MAE TAROW VILLAGERS WORRIED BY RED FLAGS BROUGHT TO THEIR COMMUNITY BY AN ARMED KNU GROUP



Photo: မိုးစန္ဒ

Shot on Y911
Vivo AI camera

2019.10.21 07:37

October 23, 2019

HURFOM: On October 22, 2019, a Karen armed group entered Mae Tarow village, in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State around 3 pm. The group tied long pieces of red cloth to trees and villagers' homes. Local residents feared the armed group has plans to take over the village and are worried about their safety and livelihoods.

"They [the armed group, included] four members with two motorbikes. They entered the village and tied red flags at every house without saying a word. I don't know if they did this because they weren't satisfied that we've paid taxes to the New Mon State Party (NMSP) or if they want to rule this

village. Most villagers are worried they will take over the village," said a resident of Mae Tarow.

Mae Tarow is located in an area controlled by both the NMSP and the Burmese government. The Karen armed group has been seen on patrol at night near the entrance of old Mae Tarow village, according to the resident.

"There are lots of rubber plantations at the entrance of old Mae Tarow guarded by them (the armed group). As they are on patrol, the villagers have to be cautious about their movements. At the moment, there are some villagers who dare not go to their plantation," said the resident.

According to U San Oo, the Administrator of Mae Tarow, the villagers should have a discussion with the NMSP regarding the red flags that have been tied to trees and homes by the Karen armed group. Villagers are eager to know the reaction of the NMSP. A report of this incident has been sent to the Mon State government.

"The villagers are very (worried and scared). They don't want the village ruled by another (ethnicity). If (the) Karen take over the village, the village will be destroyed. Also the village (was not) included in the Karen territory. We also phoned the NMSP. If (we are) thinking about what to do (and we don't have an urgent solution), they will take over the village. I think, the Karen armed group belongs to KNU," said the Administrator.

Mae Tarow has more than 300 houses and is inhabited only by Mon people.



They [the armed group, included] four members with two motorbikes. They entered the village and tied red flags at every house without saying a word. I don't know if they did this because they weren't satisfied that we've paid taxes to the New Mon State Party (NMSP) or if they want to rule this village. Most villagers are worried they will take over the village



News

ANDIN VILLAGERS FIGHT OFF A 2ND MEGA-PROJECT THREATENING THEIR LIVELIHOODS AND COMMUNITY



November 26, 2019

HURFOM: Toyo Thai Company Ltd. tried to build a 1,280-megawatt coal-fired power plant near Andin village, Ye Township, Mon State in 2015. The project was valued at 2.8 million dollars USD.

Andin residents developed an extensive understanding of the environmental impacts such a project would mean for their community. They systematically organized a united opposition, and were able to have the initiative suspended in early 2016.

Although residents successfully stalled this first mega-development project, now a second mega-project is being planned.

Forever Thanlwin Company Limited (FTCL) recently announced its interest to build an offshore supply base near Andin village. These types of projects involve building a sea wall near land to allow for large ships to dock and transport machinery and supplies. They are a critical component for offshore oil and gas exploration initiatives and Myanmar is currently one of the world's hotspots for offshore oil & gas exploration.

FTCL had notified the public they would hold a consultation meeting as part of a legally required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure. A third party, called Sea Trust Co., Ltd was to conduct the meeting set for November 14, 2019.

Villagers issued a public statement opposing the project two days before

the consultation meeting. On the day of the meeting villagers were organized and held up signs with their message **"no offshore supply base."**

Forever Thanlwin Company never showed up for EIA consultation.

"We have been against this project before. No matter how many (times) they want to negotiate, we will keep opposing it. The company has come here often to measure the land and water. This EIA procedural meeting was not [shared] with local people ahead of time. We only knew of it from the news," stated Ko Htwe, from a Andin youth group.

Villagers are concerned about environmental and social impacts of the project. Fish species can decline to the point of extinction when sea walls are constructed disrupting ocean wave patterns and creating lasting effects on

the small-scale fishery community of Andin.

"It will doom our fishery community if they build the offshore supply base. As the boat can't shift and the fish will be less too. The water may hit the shore when it can't flow as there is a wall that blocks them. If it happens like that all things will be destroyed. We could not fish anymore when there are big ships travelling [to and from the supply base]," said U Lwin, a fishermen in Hta Min Seit village.

Another potential implication of the project is that the Hta Min Seit village might need to be relocated and 1,400 of villagers who rely on farming, plantation gardening and fishery could lose their livelihoods if the offshore supply base is built.

In addition, local villagers are concerned that an increase of migrant workers needed for the construction of the base may add to social conflicts, increase cultural and/or ethnic tensions, or add to religious disputes and generally provoke xenophobia and nationalism controversies.

"The problem of the coal-fired power project has not been finished yet, this offshore supply project is causing local people more fear. That is why we did not accept this project," said one of the Andin villagers.



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About 1,000 of villagers have signed a petition opposing the construction of the offshore supply base and it has been submitted to the Andin Village Administrator, the Land Records and Irrigation Departments and the Mon State Chief Minister as of the 29th of March 2017.

“All of the monks, senior people, villagers and youth in this area do not accept this project. There is no transparency from the company side. There is no pre-notification. The problem of a coal-fired power has not yet disappeared. As for me, I will not accept any project and same for the will of the villagers,” said U Soe Moe Kyaw, Village Administrator of Andin village.

Due to villagers opposition and solidarity, the company cancelled the planned EIA procedural meeting. It is hard to predict when the company will come again. Andin villagers had once overcome plans for a coal-fired power plant but are now waiting to see if they can, again overcome a 2nd mega project –the construction of an offshore supply base.

Forever Thanlwin Company Limited

Forever Thanlwin Company Limited is a private company and was registered on February 24, 2017, according to a Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) statement.

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) granted FTCL permission to receive both domestic and international investments for livestock, seaport, hotel and hospital projects. FTCL is one of eight companies that was granted this investment permission in February 2018.

MIC indicated this permission was based on an agreement and recommendation made by state governments and particular ministries.

Forever Thanlwin and Andin Offshore supply

MIC also issued a permit to FTCL on 2 February 2018 to allow for the construction of an offshore supply base on 68.11 acres of land (No.1249) in Hta Min Seit village in Andin village tract, Ye Township, Mon State. According to FTCL's Managing Director, U Zaw Min Aung, this project represents over 60 million-dollars of investment to the region.

Plans for the project date back to 2012.

The company tried to hold meetings with local people in May 20, 2017 but the villagers declined to participate.

According to Senior Monk Ah Shin Nanda from Andin village, this offshore supply project may be somehow

connected with coal-fired plant which they successfully opposed in 2015-16.

However, U Zaw Min Aung has denied this offshore project is related to coal-fired power plant project.

The proposed Offshore Supply Base near Andin would service Ye Ta Kon and Zaw Tika Fuel and gas extraction efforts.

Although there has been growing opposition to the project at the community level, FTCL had been able to host a meeting to discuss their plans with the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Mon state Hluttaw, and Mon State lawmakers on March 8th, 2018.

“We have been against this project before. No matter how many (times) they want to negotiate, we will keep opposing it. The company has come here often to measure the land and water. This EIA procedural meeting was not [shared] with local people ahead of time. We only knew of it from the news,

News

FIGHTING BETWEEN NMSP AND BURMESE ARMY FORCES 500+ VILLAGERS TO FLEE HOMES



November 28, 2019

HURFOM: At 9:30 am on November 27, 2019, the Burmese army and the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) invaded the New Mon State Party (NMSP) base near Japanese Well village, Three Pagodas Pass (TPP), Kyarinnseiky Township, Karen State. There was an armed clash between the two parties. More than 500 villagers had to flee their homes and took shelter at a Mon monastery in Thailand, according to the local sources.

“When the fighting took place, I and my children were hiding at home. We dare not run outside. A lot of bullets [were shot] in front of my house. They (the soldiers forcefully) knocked on the doors of houses that raised the Mon flags. I don’t know if they are Burmese or Karen soldiers. They ordered us to come outside but we did not. I have a two-month-old child and all of my children were crying. We fled (because) we are afraid of (the soldiers),” said a local woman who witnessed the clash.

More than 500 Mon villagers have taken shelter at Gok Cha monastery in Thailand and Thai authorities are providing assistance.

According to a video clip posted by a local woman, empty houses were invaded by both the Burmese army and the Karen BGF. Individuals who were forced to flee were robbed of various

housing materials, commodities and other valuables.

The NMSP said that the actions of the Burmese army and the Karen BGF constitute a breach of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

“There was an attack at 9 am and another at 10 am. Each attack lasted for only five minutes. The Burmese army and Karen BGF informed us they want to observe the Thai-Burma border. We replied that they can do that but as they have to pass through our base, they must wear civilian dresses. But I don’t know if they want to make a conflict as they came in

military uniform. As they came in military uniform, (followed by) fighting,” said a Central Executive Committee member of the NMSP.

It has been reported that two military officials from the Burmese army and the Karen BGF were killed during the armed clash but no casualties have been reported by the NMSP.

Currently the Burmese army and the Karen BGF have taken control of the NMSP base nearby Japanese Well village and Burmese and Karen soldiers occupy the village monastery and the football field.



HURFOM ACTIVITIES

THE 71ST INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY STATEMENT BY HURFOM



December 10, 2019

HURFOM: Today, we celebrate the 71st International Human Rights Day and stand with all nations around the world in commemorating the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As this year's theme is **Youth Standing Up for Human Rights**, HURFOM aims to support the potential of youth as constructive agents of change in Burma/Myanmar and encourage them to participate in all decisions that have impacts on their wellbeing.

We believe that youth participation is essential in the fight against racism,

bullying, discrimination, hate speech, and climate change.

Today Burma/Myanmar is facing many challenges. The human rights situation continues to deteriorate dramatically, and 100,000s of IDPs and war-affected communities in many minority ethnic areas have fled crimes against humanity

to safer places. The restriction of humanitarian access has continued across the country, particularly in Rakhine and Kachin states, and extensive violations are ongoing. Impunity persists for past and current human rights violations by state forces, and the NLD-led government continues to dismiss allegations of rights violations and ignore calls for investigations and accountability.

In addition, the government has continued to use a range of oppressive laws to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association and imprison civilians for peacefully exercising such rights. Human rights defenders, journalists, and lawyers who speak out about human rights conditions around the country still face intimidation, surveillance, and attacks. Women and children are still subject to violence and need better protection under domestic legislation and through rule of law.

Together with human rights promoters, we want to support youth communities to take their role as major drivers of political, economic, and social transformations in Burma/Myanmar, as we desire to see young people leading positive change and assisting in resolving the country's current problems.

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) is a non-governmental human rights organization founded in 1995 by a group of Mon relief workers, students, and community leaders. HURFOM works to monitor the human rights situation in southern Burma, publishing print and online news, lengthy reports, and analysis of ongoing human rights violations.



News

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAPANESE WELL INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS)



December 4, 2019

HURFOM: Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) conducted a short interview with internally displaced people (IDP) who fled their homes in Japanese Well due to armed conflicts that began on November 28th, between the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the Burmese military (Tatmadaw) and the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF). Many of these internally displaced people have taken shelter at a Mon monastery in Sangkhlaburi, Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

Q: How is the current situation?

A: We are at this monastery and the soldiers have occupied our village. We came from the Japanese Well village.

Q: We've heard the Burmese military called you all to come back. Is that correct?

A: Yes, it is. We had to go to the village head and put our names on the list (of those who will come back to Japanese Well). We told the village head that we truly lived in the village and fled from home as we were afraid of the gunshots. The village head will submit a report to the Burmese army. Those who have not been listed yet can put their names on the list, tomorrow. The Burmese military is allowing us to return to our homes but we dare not

to do so. We are worried that our children will be harmed.

Q: So you dare not go back home?

A: We dare not go back home yet. We are worried about our children's safety. If I had not gone to the school yesterday (November 27), all of our children would be in trouble. I ran to the school and told the school teachers what was happening. I said the Burmese soldiers were invading (our village) and the situation is getting worse. So I urged the teachers to send the students back home. They sent back the students and kept some students whose home was very far from the school in the classroom.

Q: What caused the fighting?

A: The armed clashes will be due to the territory dispute. They (the Burmese army and the Karen BGF) attacked the Mon base (in Japanese Well) and so many bullets were found scattered in the village. The houses were not attacked. But a heavy weapon exploded near my house and the explosion made an umbrella-size hole in the roof. All our housing materials were destroyed. We were at home when the heavy weapon exploded. I did not hear that any villagers were shot. They did break into houses that had Mon flags and robbed those home of their valuables.

Q: Is the situation getting stable now?

A: The Burmese army has been calling us to return but we dare not. We aren't afraid of them, but their guns. Schools were also closed.

Q: Who told you to go back to the village?

A: The village head came and said — now, the Burmese army has control of the village and if we don't return to the village now, the army will not be responsible if our houses are destroyed. They will do nothing (to protect our properties). If we go back to the village and stay at home, the army is unable to occupy our houses. The village head explained this to us. (Because) the Burmese army is still in the village, the villagers don't want to go back.

Now, (the Burmese army) has been collecting a list of all households. After collecting the list, there must be people in every house. The Burmese army said they won't be responsible for houses that are empty. We asked the village head what can we do if the armed clashes between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Burmese army breaks out again after our return, and the village head is unable to guarantee anything. Even the village head does not know if the armed clashes will (reoccur) so we dare not go back to our homes. We don't go back. None of the villagers go back.

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News

LOCAL AUTHORITIES FAIL TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO ANTI-DRUG CAMPAIGN



November 5, 2019

HURFOM: The Ye-based Mon Area Community Development Organization (MACDO) and the Ye Mon Youth Network organized an anti-drug campaign in Ye Town, Southern Mon State recently.

Both organizations collaborated with local residents to speak out against illegal drug use, however, local authorities from the General Administration Department (GAD) and the Ye Police Force did not make a contribution to the campaign, according to a Ye resident.

"In order to organize this campaign systematically [and peacefully], we already applied [for permission in accordance with] the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. As we're officially allowed by the law, the Myanmar Police Force must protect us. They must direct the road traffic. We hoped they would cooperate with us. But there was no contribution from them," said the resident.

On the morning of November 1st, more than 100 young people from Ye campaigned throughout the town with anti-drug posters by motorbike.

In the evening, there was a debate about the harmful impacts of drugs followed by Mon traditional dances.

The organizers had invited officials from the Township GAD and the Anti-Narcotic Task Force to speak at the event, but they did not participate.

"Their absence means they don't want to make a contribution, I think," said the Ye resident.

The Program Coordinator of MACDO said their campaign wants to make more people aware of the harmful impacts of drugs.

Organizers are calling for three actions, i) To provide more rehabilitation support for drugs victims. ii) To hold drugs dealer accountable under the laws. iii) To prevent the peace process from being destroyed due to drugs and iv) To provide more educational programs that expose the harm caused by drugs.

Since 2017, MACDO has delivered anti-drug campaigns in the Basic Education High Schools in Southern Burma.

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Q: Are there any villager who has returned?

A: Some went back home to collect things they left and gave the household list (to the Burmese army). After that, they came back to this monastery again.

Q: How have villagers prepared the household list?

A: We have to make our household on the list (collected by the Burmese army). (Our village) has 250 houses. All houses are empty. No one stays there. Every one fled from the village. If we go back, the Burmese army will (officially) acknowledge that we are villagers who really stay at that village. For those who don't go back, if

something bad happens to their houses or if others have occupied their houses, the Burmese army won't take any responsibility.

Q: So it looks like the Burmese army controls everything, right?

A: Sure, they do. They have controlled everything. Now, the Burmese army governs the village and they will do as they like. It is impossible for us to go back home (at the moment).

As of November 30, 2019, approximately 700 internally displaced people (IDP) are at Gok Cha Mon monastery on the Thai side of the border and there another 170 IDPs in another Mon monastery. In addition some villagers have taken shelter in nearby plantations.

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News

LOCAL PEOPLE DEMAND THERE BE FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS FROM CEMENT INDUSTRY PROJECT



November 19, 2019

HURFOM: June Cement Industry Limited held a meeting with local villagers in the monastery of Mae Garow village in Kyeikmayaw Township on 18 November 2019 as part of a required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for its planned cement industry building.

Company representatives, the Kyeikmayaw Township's Hluttaw representative Daw Khin Myo Myint, the Mon state Environmental Protection department and the Administrator from Kyeikmayaw Township joined the consultation.

Local people have demanded there be full responsibility and accountability of the environmental impacts of the planned operation.

"We won't accept if they take responsibility only after their plant is operating. We want them to meet with local villagers and authorities together to [develop a] contract on how they will take responsibility and accountability for the negative impacts from the operation before they build the industry" said Nai Htein Win, a Mae Garow villager.

June company has taken 889.96 acres of land to build the plant. Nai Shwe Win, one of the Mae Garow villagers, asked that the unused land be returned to the original owners.

"(The company) used force to buy land from farmers in 2010 — whether sold or not. The company will have to use how many acres of land? Is there any plan to give back the unused land to landless farmers?" asked Nai Shwe Win.

The company responded that there is no unused land and that the 889.96 acres is still less than their needs.

At the EIA consultation local people also raised concerns about a third party called the E-guard company who had been asking unrelated questions of the villagers while conducting an EIA survey.

In addition villagers expressed concerns that historical temples and a Buddha statue in the mountain range will be affected when the cement company starts mining.

According to U Tin Oo, project director, *"The company will follow rule of law taking responsibility and accountability to maintain the least [possible negative] effects on the environment. The residents can complain ...and [it has already been] explained how to [register their concerns]."*

Nine women among the participants who joined the EIA public consultation meeting, reported they don't understand the Burmese language very

well and did not receive a proper explanation of the EIA procedure.

"We don't understand what they said at all. We've joined the meeting [because] we didn't want to embarrass our village administration. If they speak (Mon), we will understand. We can say no if we don't like it (if we understand). But now, we do not dare say (anything as we don't understand them)" cited Daw Shaw, one of Mae Garow villagers.

The villagers are not totally against the project, and their main demand is with the plans to use coal-fired power, according to local resources.

One local woman, Daw San Oo said *"if [this is a] coal powered plant, we won't agree as it is most dangerous and affects our health. We already witnessed the impacts. Due to Mawlamyine Cement Limited – MCL's ship, our river and houses are destroyed so that we don't want it to happen again"*.

The company argued it must use coal-fired power until the government is able to provide natural gas and electricity.

"As (the state) could not support [gas or electricity], we need to use [coal-fired power]. We will change it immediately when they provide us

[with natural gas or electricity]

. As we are not sure when that will be, we can't provide an exact time to change [the power source]," continued U Tin Oo.

The June company received permission from the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) on 26 March in 2016, for the construction of the plant following an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and a Social Impact Assessment (SIA), according to U Tin Oo.

The June company has invested 471 million USD in the project and plans to produce 5,000 ton of cement per day.

News

BURMESE (MYANMAR) ARMY AND BGF TROOPS STEAL OVER 75 MILLION KYAT FROM PALAING JAPAN VILLAGERS



December 10, 2019

HURFOM: The village leaders in Palaing Japan village (literal translation-Japanese Well) have calculated the losses of stolen belongings and damaged property, during the raid of Burmese Army and Border Guard Force (BGF) on the 27th of November. They calculate villagers lost approximately 55 million Kyat, from looting by armed soldiers. Added to this loss the soldiers also took a Toyota Tiger model (D4D) truck, with an estimated value of 20 million Kyat, from the village.

In the morning of 27th November, the Burmese Army troops from LIB No. 283 and two BGF battalions broke the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and entered the village, which is under the control of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and its armed forces (MNLA). Fighting broke out and the Burmese Army along with the BGF members occupied the village.

One village leader said, *"After the occupation, we heard the BGF force were searching every house, belonging to Mon soldiers, and took their belongings."*

Individual households reported their losses to the village leaders. 11 households reported they lost a lot of belongings, varying from cooking pots to motor repair equipment,

Approximately 900 villagers from Palaing Japan, Guu Bowl, and Don Dot Poik villages have fled to temporary shelter in Thailand or have sought refuge in nearby plantations. Thai authorities including the Thai Red Cross have lent basic food assistance, health care services and clothes.

After the villagers had fled, BGF Karen soldiers searched some of their houses and their belongings were taken.

Village heads have confirmed the losses of repair equipment and supplies from a motorbike repair shop. Nai Soe Khaing, the owner says he lost over 300,000 Baht (15,000,000 Kyat) just from property taken from his house. He also showed lists of equipment and supplies from his house.

It is also believed that soldiers took a Tiger model Toyota car belonging to a Nai Pyeal.

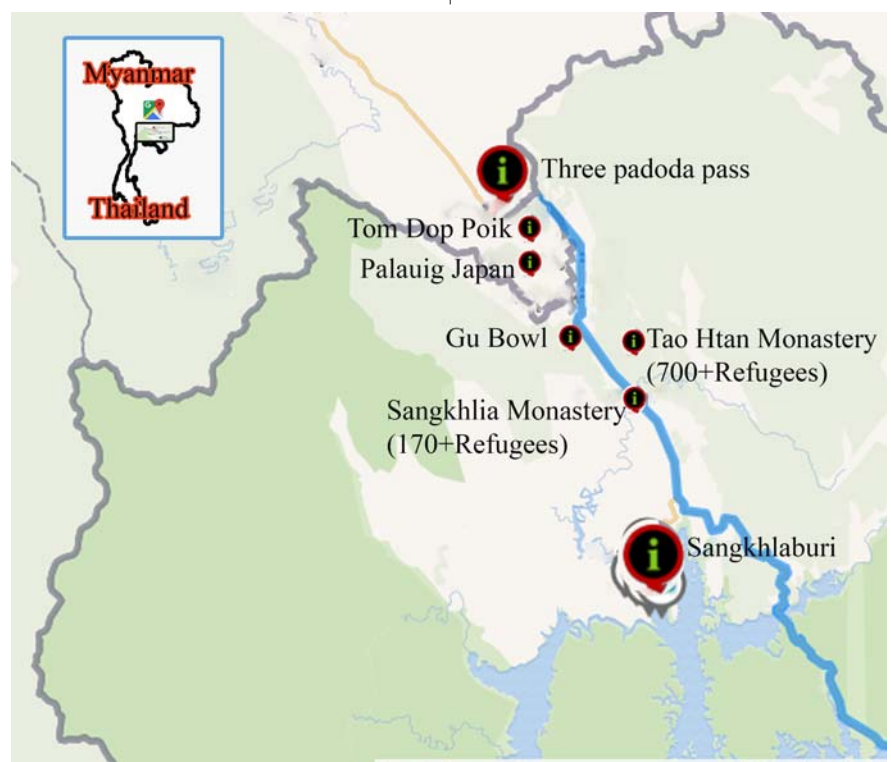
The village heads explained, *"there are about 11 houses that were looted and the MNLA base's motorbikes, ammunitions, TV, Skynet equipment were taken by Burmese soldiers."*

They value of lost goods is estimated to be 1.1 million Baht or 55 million Kyat. A Toyota car is worth approximately, 20 million Kyat, bringing the total losses to 75 million Kyat.

The village heads will report these losses to the Liaison office of the New Mon State Party (NMSP), who in turn will discuss the matter with commanders of the Burmese Army in order to return the looted goods or reimburse for the losses in cash.

After more than a week of military tension, NMSP leaders and the Burmese Army military commanders negotiated a remedy. The BGF troops withdrew from the border on 4th December. The MNLA troops took over their bases. However, the Burmese Army set up another base just 300 meters away from the MNLA base.

The displaced villagers remain afraid of returning to their homes fearing that fighting could break out any time. Thai authorities have closed the temporary camps in the monasteries, and many villagers remain in the plantations along the borderline, although some men have returned their homes.



News

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND REFORMS TO MNHRC

December 12, 2019

HURFOM: On December 9, 2019, 20 human rights organizations jointly launched a report called “A Little Less Conversation, A Little More Action Please” in Yangon.

The report analyses the performance of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) and highlights human rights violations in 2018 and 2019. The report also calls for reforms within the MNHRC in order to better promote and protect human rights.

“In order to handle human rights problems effectively, MNHRC must first bring in some new blood, [new people are needed] who really respect and follow human rights norms. Secondly, the law governing the Commission must be amended to expand its authority,” said Maung Saung Kha, an organizer of Athan, a group advocating for freedom of expression.

The report notes that current Commission members lack a strong

human rights ideology and there are problems in the commission’s structure and election processes. As a result, the Commission has been ineffective in handling human rights problems and serves as an organization that protects the military.

Ko Aung Zaw Oo, a member of the Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters, said *“The main challenge is that those who protect the government for their human rights abuses have been included in the Commission. The old members are problematic. They’ve run the Commission as a (government) department. In fact, the Commission must be free and independent. But they protect the wrongdoings of the military and the police force. That’s why we asked for [for new Commissioners] to be included, those who really respect and follow human rights norms must serve on the Commission.”*

Another current and serious challenge human rights defenders face is being sued with existing laws for their work.

“There are oppressive laws for human rights defenders. They were sued with those laws and some of them have been in jail. Some are facing legal action in the courts. (It looks like the government has planned that) human rights defenders must be busy and annoyed with long legal proceedings. Those are challenges for us,” said Ko Aung Zaw Oo.

In order to get a better and effective promotion and protection of human rights, the report urges reforms be made to the Commission.

“The commission has no desire to handle human rights violations in war-torn ethnic areas. Or they have no capability to handle the violations. Especially, when the Commission is unwilling to handle violations committed by the military,” said Ko Bo Bo from Generation Wave.

The term for current Commission members expired in September, 2019 but the Commission has not released any official statement about re-election of its members.



Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people, The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- ☐ Monitoring the human rights situation in Mon territory and other areas in southern Burma
- ☐ Protecting and promoting internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM produces the monthly “Mon Forum” newsletters. If publication is delayed it is because we are waiting to confirm information, and it comes with our heartfelt apologies.

We encourage you to write to us if you have feedback or if you know someone who you think would like to receive the newsletter.

Please email or mail a name and address to:

HURFOM, P.O. Box 35, Sangkhalburi Post Office,
Kanchanaburi, 71240 Thailand

E-mail: info@rehmonnya.org

Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director

Human Rights Foundation of Monland

DRUG REHABILITATION CENTER SOON TO BE OPEN IN EAST YE



December 16, 2019

HURFOM: Before 2020, a drug rehabilitation center will open in the New Mon State Party (NMSP) controlled area of Wel Zin region, East Ye Town, Ye Township, Mon State.

“We’ve planned to open before the end of 2019, so we have to start with what we have now. Only the cell and the kitchen are left to be constructed so we can surely run the Center before the end of 2019. We have already

explained to the locals about the center,” said Nai Jel Tar Mun, the Vice Chair of the Center and the Secretary of Dawei District.

Operating procedures of the Center were explained to the Parlain and Southern Ye residents in the second week of December.

“We already explained to the villagers why we operate the center and how we will run it. We also explained our construction work and what challenges we have. We let them know how they

can contribute to the center. Villagers can donate money to the operations,” said Nai Jel Tar Mun.

The opening had been planned for August, 2019 but Ye Township was flooded at that time, so the launch had to be postponed.

Officials met with community based organizations in Mawlamyine and exchanged knowledge and operational recommendations.

“I like the services that will be provided by the rehabilitation center. They (officials of the center) explained to us how many kratom leaves will result in a person being arrested and how many pills of illicit drugs can result in jail time. This information is useful, so I appreciate it,” said Nai Kaung Kalay from Andin village.

The committee to establish the drug rehabilitation center was founded in 2018 at the Youth and Drug Forum held in Koyinlay Sayardaw Monastery, Ye and consists of 45 members – 15 from the religious community, 15 from CBOs and 15 from NMSP.

2 POLICE STAFF SENTENCED TO THREE MONTHS IN JAIL FOR BEATING INNOCENT VILLAGERS



December 23, 2019

HURFOM: On May 21st 2018, Police Sergeant Thein Hline Oo and Police Private Sai Htet Aung, from the Yin Nyein Police Station, seriously beat two villagers from Kyauk YeTwin village, Paung Township, Mon State.

The two villagers suffered cuts and bruises due to the police abuse and filed a lawsuit against the two policemen under Criminal Acts #323 – punishment for voluntarily causing hurt and #506 – punishment for criminal intimidation on May 25, 2018.

The Paung Township Court conducted a hearing on July 2, 2018 and after 55 court hearings, Paung Township Judge Daw Aye Mi Thu sentenced the two police officers to three months in jail on December 18, 2019.

"I'm satisfied with the court's decision. I was beaten without having done anything wrong. The legal proceedings took nearly two years. During this time my family endured

livelihood hardships. I worry the two policemen will try to hurt me again after their release," said one of the victims.

Even though the two villagers reported their cases to the village Administrator, nothing was done for them, according to U Sein Aung, who provided legal aid to the victims.

"Let's say, I am satisfied (with the court decision). (Indeed, the amount of punishment is) just a (small) lesson (to the two policemen). (The judge just warned them) not to abuse civilians. There was a significant amount of media coverage of the case so the judge had to sentence the two policemen to three months in jail. If (there was no media coverage), the legal procedure would have likely ended with just a monetary fine," said U Sein Aung.

According to U Sein Aung, even the two policemen were sentenced to three months in jail, they were not handcuffed when they left the court.

HURFOM

P.O BOX 35,
Sangkhlaburi Post Office,
Kanchanaburi 71240,
Thailand
info@rehmonnya.org

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