

## SURGE IN PEST INFESTATION THREATENS PADDY PRODUCTION AND LIVELIHOODS IN MUDON TOWNSHIP



December 27, 2017

Paddy production in Kamarwat Town, Mudon Township, Mon State is under threat due to a significant increase in pest infestations this year, according to local farmers.

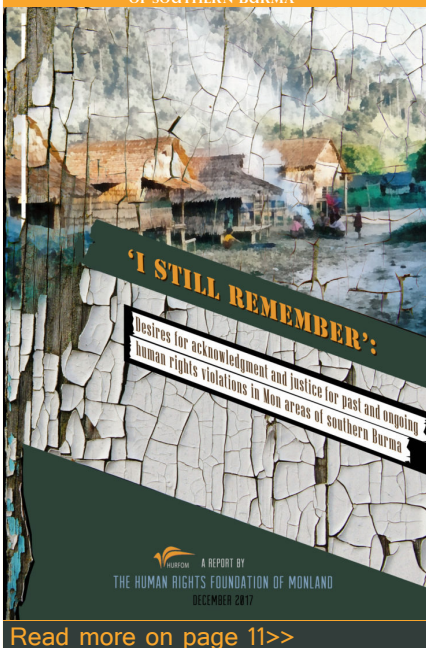
*"The farmland in Kamarwat has been infested nearly every year, but this year we had a huge infestation. Some farmers lost half of their farmland. They can't make a profit any longer, so they have had to stop working on their farmland,"* said Nai Bran, a local farmer from Kamarwat.

Local farmers believe the abnormal magnitude of this year's infestation is due to the unexpected extension of the rainy season.

*"We've been experiencing infestations for a long time, but it's always just a little more or a little less. The local farmers have been very disappointed. The government has not supported us with anything and there is no one to make a report to the government. We can do nothing but suffer from the loss. If your farmland is infested a lot, you have to sell your gold or borrow money,"* continued Nai Bran.

[Read more on page3>>](#)

HURFOM RELEASES "I STILL REMEMBER": DESIRES FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND JUSTICE FOR PAST AND ONGOING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MON AREAS OF SOUTHERN BURMA"



[Read more on page 11>>](#)

## AGENTS CHARGE HIGH FEES AS MAWLAMYINE PASSPORT OFFICE INUNDATED WITH APPLICATIONS



November 1, 2017

According to passport applicants, applying for a passport at the Mawlamyine Passport Office in Mon State can cost anywhere from 26,000 kyat (US \$19) to 200,000 (US \$147) kyat in order to receive their documents.

*"In reality, the [Mawlamyine] Passport Office already charges 21,000 [kyat] (US \$15) for each passport. They [Passport Office Staff] transfer that amount of money to the [Office's] bank account in front of the applicants. Later, we have to spend some money on copying documents. The whole process, including taking [passport] photos, costs[a total of] 26,000 [kyat]. If you apply for a passport via agents, it will take two days but it costs 200,000 [kyat],"* said Nai Chan Mon, a Thanbyuzayat resident who has recently applied for his passport.

[Read more on page3>>](#)

# SURGE IN PEST INFESTATION THREATENS PADDY PRODUCTION AND LIVELIHOODS IN MUDON TOWNSHIP



Normally, an acre of farmland in Kamarwat can produce approximately 60 baskets (1,259 kg/2,704.8 lb.) of paddy rice; however, after this year's infestation, production has declined by half, producing approximately 30 baskets (629.5 kg/1,352.4 lb.).

Year by year, as their farmland has failed to make enough profit, some farmers have abandoned their farmland and

some have turned their farmland into rubber plantations, according to a local farmer.

*"Farmland nearby Kamarwat has been infested by insects for years. This year, some farmlands have been infested three times, while some have been infested four times. Only a few paddy fields have escaped infestation. The infested farmland can only produce a*

*little paddy, so the owners have been put into debt,"* said Nai Blai, a local farmer who owns 12 acres of farmland.

Most farmers have to hire daily workers to aid them with their farm work. Now, with the infestation, shortage of paddy, and high fees of daily workers, many farmers have been forced to give up their traditional livelihoods.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- **News:** Locals accuse former village headman in Thanbyuzayat of vote manipulation and electoral fraud
- **News:** Farmers in Kyaikmayaw Township shocked to learn land sold without any notification
- **Briefer-Report:** HURFOM Releases "I Still Remember": Desires for acknowledgement and justice for past and ongoing human rights violations in Mon areas of southern Burma"
- **News:** Growing demand for electricity in homes leading to frequent power outages, Thanbyuzayat Township

## AGENTS CHARGE HIGH FEES AS MAWLAMYINE PASSPORT OFFICE INUNDATED WITH APPLICATIONS



The Mawlamyine Passport Office usually operates from 9:00 am until 9:00-10:00 pm and it is reported that on occasion office staff have had to work until 1:00 am to manage the large volume of applicants.

*"The office staff said they have to work late everyday [to keep pace with demand]. Applicants who use an agent can spend up to 60,000 – 70,000 kyat [US \$44-\$51]. The fee depends on your negotiation skills. However, if you have an urgent case, you must use agents*

*and spend 200,000kyat," continued Nai Chan Mon.*

Normally, the passport application process will take about ten days, but agents can expedite the process. If an applicant uses an agent, he or she can expect more privileges than ordinary applicants as agents have developed an understanding with office staff.

*"Even though the signboards in the Passport Office clearly state that the office will not accept 'passport agents', the agents openly recruit customers in the office. When an applicant comes into the office, all agents run to him or her trying to persuade them to be their client. It's very annoying," said Nai Sue, who also applied for his passport.*

Burma has seen a surge in demand for passports amongst its citizens as the country began enacting reforms over the last few years

## ATTEMPTED RAPE OF 13-YEAR-OLD GIRL IN THANBYUZAYAT TOWNSHIP, MON STATE

October 24, 2017

**HURFOM:** On October 9<sup>th</sup> 2017, it was reported that a 26-year-old daily worker Maung T— from Htan Pin Gyi Chaung (Wae Ka Poke) village, Paung Township, Mon State, had attempted to rape a 13-year-old named Mi H— who lives in K— Ward, Pa Nga village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

During the incident, the girl was home alone as her mother was travelling to Ah Nin village to sell fish paste, while her father was fishing in Ye and her brother was working at a rubber plantation. However, her mother asked a 50-year-old neighbor named Daw M— to look after her daughter as she was home alone.

When Daw M— saw that Maung T— was heading towards Mi H—'s house, Daw M— stopped him and told him not to go to the girl's house as her mother was not at home. However, Maung T— ignored Daw M—'s warning and went

to the house anyways. As his behavior was suspicious, Daw M— went to the girl's house later and saw both of them naked in the bedroom.

She said to Maung T—, *"You can't do this."* However, she was afraid to stop him so she went to ask for help from the neighbors. After the incident, Daw M— contacted the girl's mother and she arrived home at 12:00 pm. After that, they reported the incident to the village administrator and the perpetrator was arrested at his mother's house as he had fled from his house.

According to Daw M—, Mi H— said, *"Maung T— arrived home and asked me if my mother was at home. After that, he went into the house, closed the doors and brought me into the bedroom. He took off my pants and I heard Daw M—'s voice when he was taking off his longyi. When I tried to reply to Daw M—, Maung T— covered my mouth."*

The girl's mother wanted Maung T— charged with Myanmar Penal Code #376 (punishment for rape) and Penal Code #511 (punishment for attempting to commit offences punishable with transportation or imprisonment) at the Thanbyuzayat Police Station. However, the Thanbyuzayat police charged Maung T— with "attempt to rape" as it has been difficult to medically prove whether the girl had been raped by Maung T—.

According to the girl's mother, Maung T— is married and is allegedly notorious for having relationships with many women.

Over the past several years, there has been a marked increase in the number of reported cases of sexual violence against children. In March 2017, HURFOM released *'Cracks in the Silence'*, which explores this growing phenomenon, as well as the challenges to accessing justice for families and survivors of sexual violence in Burma's pluralistic legal system.

News

# LOCALS ACCUSE FORMER VILLAGE HEADMAN IN THANBYUZAYAT OF VOTE MANIPULATION AND ELECTORAL FRAUD



October 20, 2017

**HURFOM:** On October 15<sup>th</sup> 2017, a local election for village headman was held in Karotepi village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State, and local villagers have accused the former village headman, Nai Cartoon, with interfering in the election process in order to ensure the election of his party's successor.

Nai Cartoon resigned from his position as village headman during an investigation by the General Administration Department (GAD) over accusations of corruption and selling community land for personal profit.

*"He [Nai Cartoon] had known in advance that he would be punished [for his misconduct] and removed from his position. So before he was removed, he proposed his resignation. And then, when the new election for village headman was held, his [preferred] man was elected as the new village headman,"* said Karotepi resident Nai Ba Nyar Din, who monitored the election process.

Three days prior to the election on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2017, the chairman of the local Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) – U Aung Kyi Thein who

*won the 2017 by-election in Chaungzone Township – visited Karotepi and met with local community members. During his consultation with villagers, he said that only his party was capable of implementing local development projects. Later, on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2017, his fellow party member Nai Aung Yin was elected as the new village headman.*

*During the Karotepi village election, there were 1,586 eligible households and 647 households casted their votes. There were 939 absentees and 48 votes were canceled. Nai Aung Yin of the USDP won the election with 346 votes in favor, in contrast to Nai Hla Tin of the Mon National Party (MNP) who received 253 votes. Electoral monitors believe these voting figures may have been manipulated.*

*"As he noticed that he would be removed from his position, Nai Cartoon had planned to make his [party's] man become the new village headman. He and his party [the USDP] systematically manipulated [the election process] and a member of the USDP won the village headman election. But there was a difference [irregularity] between the number of voters and the numbers of villagers who have the right to vote. But it's still under investigation and we*

*don't know yet,"* said Nai Myo Thein, another resident who monitored the election process.

Nai Cartoon's resignation as village headman comes amidst a slew of investigations into alleged corruption by village administrators in Mon State this year. Since Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan took office earlier this year, ten village administrators have been investigated for alleged misconduct, including at least eight who have already been dismissed. Recently, the HmameKaNane village headman was sacked over corruption accusations, leading some villagers to protest the lack of transparency in the investigative process.

*He [Nai Cartoon] had known in advance that he would be punished [for his misconduct] and removed from his position. So before he was removed, he proposed his resignation. And then, when the new election for village headman was held, his [preferred] man was elected as the new village headman,*



## News

# MONEY MAKES BIG CRIMES SMALL, AS CORRUPTION IN THE POLICE AND JUDICIARY RAMPANT IN MON STATE

October 11, 2017

**HURFOM** Serious crimes such as those related to the drug trade can be reduced or dismissed by bribing authorities with a small fortune, according to a local in southern Ye Township, Mon State.

*"The police arrested my nephew for having seven pills of methamphetamine. [But] he is just a real user, [not a trafficker]. They had to bribe the doctor who did the urine drug test in order to make the test negative. As the police and the doctor were working in cooperation, [they had to bribe them] more than 1.5 million kyat (US \$1,110.98). The crime of using drugs can be dismissed like this," said Nai O— from R Ru Tong village, southern Ye Township, Mon State.*

*Last year, a 22-year-old villager of R Ru Tong was arrested by the Thanbyuzayat Township police for drug use and trafficking and sent to Mawlamyine for trial proceedings. Before the trial was concluded, his family had to use more*

*than 20 million kyat (US \$14,813.50) to bribe the authorities in order to manipulate the investigation, including receiving negative urine drug test results and ensuring detention in jail was not too harsh.*

*"We had to use money everywhere. If you don't use money, the trial decision will not be made easily. We had to bribe them with more than 1.5 million kyat for [a negative] urine drug test. Hiring a lawyer would cost us more than 1.5 million kyat. We had to bribe the judge with about 1 million kyat (US \$740.91). In conclusion, the trial proceedings lasted for a year and we had to use more than 20 million kyat, excluding other small expenses," said the uncle of a villager who had been charged with drug use and trafficking.*

*"As soon as you are arrested, the police say the legal proceedings must be sent to Naypyidaw and they demand 400,000 kyat (US \$296.36). To go to the Mawlamyine police station, you have to hire a car for about 100,000 kyat (US*

*\$74.09). You have to hire a car again to go from the police station to the court. There were too many things to do such as going for a urine drug test, hiring a lawyer, and bribing the judge. I can't remember everything. You had to use money everywhere. After that, the possible six-year imprisonment was reduced to 2 years in prison. It was such a relief. But you had to spend lots of money. You had to bribe many departments [and individuals]. An ordinary criminal case will cost you about 10 million kyat (US \$7,408.68)," said Nai O— of R Ru Tong.*

*Lawyers and activists have repeatedly complained about the long trial times, which may take up to several years, and the costs associated with travelling to and from multiple court proceedings. For an overview of the challenges to accessing justice in Mon State, see 'Cracks in the Silence: Sexual violence against children and challenges to accessing justice in Mon state and Mon areas of southeast Burma.'*

## PUBLIC OUTCRY LEADS HINTHAR MEDIA TO DROP MAWLAMYINE CEMENT LIMITED (MCL) AS A SPONSOR FOR PUBLIC EVENT

November 29, 2017

A Mawlamyine-based, private media group has faced serious public backlash over its choice of sponsor for their public event. On November 29<sup>th</sup> 2017, Hinthar Media organized a public debate sponsored by Mawlamyine Cement Co. Ltd. (MCL) on the *"The Future of the Union of Mon Political Parties and Mon National Unity"* held in Mawlamyine.

The criticism of its choice of main sponsor for the event was swift, with even the Deputy Speaker of the Mon State Parliament – Dr. Aung Nyne Oo – speaking out against the choice.

*"We have to be with our people. If the debate accepted MCL as their main sponsor, I can't accept [the debate]. We must stand with our people. The debate*

*organizers must explain about [the policy of accepting the sponsors] before the debate starts," said Dr. Aung Nyne Oo.*

MCL has been operating a controversial coal-powered cement factory in Kyaikmayaw Township, which has drawn a large volume of criticism over its disruptive and damaging consequences for villager livelihoods and the local environment.

The public outcry eventually led Hinthar Media to drop MCL as a sponsor of the event.

*"It's true that Hinthar Media had decided to accept MCL as the main sponsor. But the Abbot of the Bago Pariyatti Monastery in Mawlamyine, civilians, and even the Deputy Speaker*

*of the Mon State Parliament, Dr Aung Nyne Oo, criticized the sponsor. So now, we do not accept MCL as our main sponsor," said Hinthar Media Editor and moderator of the debate Awo Kao Rot.*

Later, Hinthar Media released a statement explaining the policy and procedures regarding inviting sponsors for public events. In a statement Hinthar Media said they had invited local banks and business groups to sponsor the debate and that MCL replied that they would like to be the main sponsor of the debate.

Hinthar Media also said they would put out a 'correction' on the sponsor list in the Hinthar Journal No 1, Vol. 34. In addition, they also apologized for the inconvenience.

News

# PAUNG TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENT AND LIVELIHOODS UNDER THREAT FROM STONE MINING

November 24, 2017

According to a press conference held on November 11<sup>th</sup> 2017 by the Network for Social Development and Peace (NSDP) regarding their new report on the environment and human rights, locals in Paung Township, Thaton District, Mon State face a variety of abuses and environmental destruction from stone mining projects.

The report covers 13 villages in Paung Township with high levels of stone mining activity. Daw Zun Pan, the lead negotiator from the NSDP, estimates the existence of about 25 stone mining projects in the area.

*“Due to the stone mining projects, locals have lost their rights. For example, there is a lack of jobs in their area as companies have destroyed water resources. Locals [also] rely on the river for other aspects of their livelihoods. The purpose of this report*

*is to raise awareness about local suffering and to present their point of view on the impact of stone mining projects,”* said Daw Zun Pan.

The report from NSDP describes serious damage to the local environment as a result of stone mining, highlighting the destruction of water resources, forest areas, and farming land. Soil erosion from these projects has also increased instances of flooding, causing further damage to streams and paddy fields.

*“We feel that we are suffering from human rights abuses, environmental damage, psychological abuse, and even health dangers from stone mining projects. We also feel that the current foreign investment law lacks a mechanism to complain to companies about their projects. To solve this problem, responsible action from the government is needed,”* said a villager from Ouktada village, Paung Township, Mon State.

The NSDP report also highlights predatory labor practices from stone mining companies, in addition to the constant clouds of dust from stone mining activities which cause health and respiratory problems for local residents. Freedom of movement has also been impacted, as villagers are unable to access some local forest areas they rely on to gather bamboo for their livelihoods.

Perhaps the biggest issue with stone mining activities for locals are the daily controlled explosions, which in addition to noise pollution, sends debris flying, destroying homes, farmlands, and religious sites such as Buddhist temples and pagodas.

According to Mon State General Administration Department (GAD) Director U Soe Myint, there are 64 companies with work permits for stone mining projects and the majority of them are operating in Paung and Kyaikto townships, northern Mon State



## News

## FAMILY UPSET OVER LIGHT SENTENCE GIVEN TO MAN WHO RAPED 3-YEAR-OLD GRAND-DAUGHTER

November 27, 2017

WCRP: The family of a 3-year-old victim of rape is upset with the Mawlamyine District Court's decision to jointly charge and convict the perpetrator of both rape and attempted rape. The inclusion of Section #511 (Punishment for attempting to commit offenses) under Burma's Penal Code significantly reduced the sentence from 20 to ten years in prison, leading some activists to accuse the District Court of lack of rule of law.

Daw Khin Than Htwe, Chairman of the Mon State Women and Children Upgrade Committee (MWCUC) said, *"due to Section #511 (attempting to commit offenses punishable), the perpetrator received a chance to be released on bail. We could say that there is no rule of law since the court set the order without removing code Section #511. According to the child's testimony, she said that the perpetrator took her to bed and injected her vagina and backside with a finger. We should not think that is only attempting to commit [rape]."*

On August 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, the child had come back home from outside at about 2 pm

and was crying. She told her grandmother that her vagina was in pain. Once her grandmother looked she saw that it was red and bleeding, according to a neighbor of the victim.

The perpetrator, a 73-year-old man in the neighborhood, told the young girl that he would buy her a snack if she didn't cry. The girl's grandparents reported the case to the Mu Pon police station in Mawlamyine.

The victim's grandfather is not satisfied with the Mawlamyine District Court's order and had petitioned the court to remove Section #511 from the charges several times.

According to a source from the Mawlamyine District Court, the standard punishment for those charged with both Section #376 (Punishment for Rape) and Section #511 is ten years in prison. This is in contrast to the 20 years imprisonment for the rape of a child.

*"I don't understand about the sentence of ten years [imprisonment]. I only understand that the punishment is 20 years. I thought that the perpetrator was being sentenced to prison for 30 years – 20 years' imprisonment [Section*

*#376] plus another ten years [Section #511]. But once I asked the lawyer, the perpetrator was sentenced to prison for only ten years. It is not fair to us,"* said the victim's grandfather.

In addition, while released on bail the perpetrator sued the victim's family, saying he was wrongly accused by the victim's family.

*"The perpetrator said that the victim's family accused him of raping their granddaughter because the family owed him money and couldn't pay him back. The victim's family had to deal with that problem for about one year. They have had to make about 78 court appearances. However, in this kind of case, if an organization [like us] does not help, the victim's family would not be winning their case,"* said Daw Khin Than Htwe, whose organization supported the family during their ordeal.

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) previously reported on this case in their March 2017 report, *"Cracks in the Silence: Sexual violence against children and challenges to accessing justice in Mon State and Mon areas of southeast Burma."*

## NEW COMMITTEE FORMED TO COMBAT DRUG USE IN YE TOWNSHIP, MON STATE

December 4, 2017

WCRP: A new committee to combat drug use among youths in Ye Township, Mon State has been formed. The announcement came after a discussion on the issue of drugs was held on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017 in Ye Township. Around 450 individuals, including New Mon State Party (NMSP) officials, citizens, and monks participated in the discussions.

The aim of the talks was to discuss methods for eliminating drugs and promoting the improvement of skills among youths to foster better outcomes.

The committee is composed of seven members of the NMSP, seven locals from southern and northern Ye Township, and seven monks. The new anti-drug committee assigned committee members at the village, township, and district levels and they aim to fight against drug use, while also advocating for better drug treatment programs. In addition, they aim to perform drug education services for villagers.

*"We are happy to have a chance to share our knowledge about the impact of drugs, treatment for drug use, and the fight against drugs...If there are*

*drug sellers, users will buy it. As there is a huge profit from selling drugs, the Mon locals make a business out of it. To prohibit the sellers, authorities must effectively handle drug dealers using the law,"* said committee member U Tin Shine.

For more information on the sale and use of drugs in Mon State and Mon areas of southeast Burma, see *"Bitter Pills: Breaking the silence surrounding drug problems in the Mon community"* by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM).

News

# FARMERS IN KYAIKMAYAW TOWNSHIP SHOCKED TO LEARN LAND SOLD WITHOUT ANY NOTIFICATION



November 29, 2017

Farmers in Kaw Panaw and Mae Garo villages, Kyaukse Township, Mon State were surprised to learn that their land had been sold to June Cement Industry Ltd. (JCI) without any notification. At a local land forum on November 14<sup>th</sup> 2017, local farmers reported only finding out when applying for Land Use Certificates.

*"We have 9.47 acres of land. However, now we only have 5.47 acres after applying for the Land Use Certificate, as the remaining four acres are listed as company land. We didn't even know about it. We are trying to get and Use Certificate for our remaining four acres of land, but we heard that our land was sold by others for 50,000 kyat (US \$36.62) per acre. After I learned about my land being sold, I went to our administrator and reported about it,"* said Daw Boh from Mae Garo village.

Daw Boh was informed by the village administrator that JCI would provide 200,000 kyat (US \$146.48) as compensation for her four acres of land and asked her to sign an agreement. In

addition, she could continue to use the land while the project was inactive. Daw Boh refused to accept the agreement, stating she will continue to work her land.

Moreover, a monk from Kaw Don village reports trying for two years to obtain a Land Use Certificate for his parents' land, until finally learning that it had been sold.

In addition to having land sold without notification, some farmers report being pressured to sell their land. Locals report that in 2010 JIC collaborated with the Settlement and Land Records Department and local village administrators in order to buy land at a cheap price. JIC reportedly told some locals that they needed the land for a state project and that if they did not sell them their land, they would take it without compensation.

Deputy Officer U Kyaw Thein from the Department of Agricultural Land Management and Statistics in Kyaukse Township suggests that farmers whose land has been sold should contact the township General

Administration Department (GAD) who will conduct an investigation to determine a solution.

He added that *"before, those areas were flooding and they couldn't go to the field, but now it is fine and they can do investigations. So farmers can tell about their problems to the GAD office in Kyaukse Township. After they conduct an investigation, the farmers will know who is right and who is wrong."*

In contrast, U Aung Kyaw Thu – Chairman of the Mon State Complaint and Appeal Letter Review and Assessment Committee—suggests it is more effective to send complaint letters to the Mon State Parliament rather than reporting to the local administration.

Land confiscation is a pervasive problem throughout Burma. For more information on land confiscation in Mon State and Mon areas of southeast Burma, see: [Yearning to be Heard: Mon Farmers' continued struggle for acknowledgment and protection of their rights.](#)

• • • •

## News

# LOCALS REJECT ELECTRICITY GENERATING PROJECT OVER WORRIES ABOUT COAL

November 22, 2017

Locals in Ah Nin village, Thanbyuzayat Township, are concerned over a contract between the Mon State government and Bedok Construction and Engineering (BCE) Co. Ltd. to provide electricity to communities in the area. Villagers are worried about the potential use of coal-powered plants to fulfill Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan's promise to bring electricity to many of Mon State's communities.

In addition, the Mon State Chief Minister also confirmed an agreement with local businessman U Sein Warn to establish an electrical power plant in Ah Nin village. U Sein Warn is a representative from the Myanmar Lighting Co. Ltd. which already provides 230 megawatts of electricity to Ngan Tae Ward, Mawlamyine.

According to Nai Pa Lon Ga Ta, a local activist from Ah Nin village, U Sein Warn has already bought about 500 acres of land in the region.

*"We don't oppose development projects. But now, there has been no transparency. For instance, we don't know if they will use clean energy for the electrical power plant. If they do so, the electricity fee will*

*be expensive and they won't get much profit. But if they use coal, they can reduce the cost. We want electricity but we also worry about coal-fired power plants,"* said Nai Pa Lon Ga Ta.

The development project promised by the Mon State Chief Minister has become controversial amongst local villagers and some have voiced that they will oppose the project. Moreover, some villagers are unable to decide whether to sell their land to the project or not.

*"They said they would provide development to our region. They said they would build roads and provide electricity. Their development project needs about 5,000 acres of land. Now U Sein Warn has sent a representative to buy land and I think, they already got about 500 acres of land. Some villagers had known nothing about the project and just sold their land. Some are aware of the project and haven't sold their land to U Sein Warn. Now we have been advocating for people to not sell their land to U Sein Warn. They said they will use clean energy. But when we look at the [coal powered] Kyaikmayaw Cement Factory, they had already started the*

*project and continued their project even though the locals opposed them. So we must conduct a good preventative campaign before the project starts,"* continued Nai Pa Lon Ga Ta.

Mawlamyine Cement Limited's (MCL) coal-fired power plant in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State, which began full operations earlier this year, has generated large amounts of controversy and opposition among local residents who claim it has damaged the environment, including water resources, aquatic life, and local farmland.

In order to monitor local development projects in the Ah Nin village region, villagers from Ah Nin and its surrounding villages have formed an environmental organization named the Ah Nin Region Environmental Conservation Group.

The Mon State government and BCE signed a multi-development project agreement for Ah Nin village on March 9<sup>th</sup> 2017 in Mawlamyine. HURFOM was unable to confirm if the projects have received approval from the Union Government.

## YEBYU TOWNSHIP SEES SHARP INCREASE IN DRUG USE AMONG TEENS AS AUTHORITIES DO LITTLE TO COMBAT USE AND SALE

December 28, 2017

According to locals, drug use in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division has increased sharply as more youths are experimenting with drugs.

*"In the past, young adolescents were using drugs, but not as much as they are using today. Now, most of the drug addicts are teenagers. They use both methamphetamines and Kratom leaves. No one can control them and no authority arrests them,"* said Nai Kon Htaw, an activist in Yebyu.

Previously, the use and sale of drugs in Yebyu was done secretly, now, however, the drug trade operates openly. The lack of arrests has created an environment of impunity for drug dealers and users,

leading to an influx of drugs and dealers in Yebyu, according to Nai Kon Htaw.

*"They sell drugs like they sell vegetables in the market. Drugs are available on every street corner. A pill of premium-quality methamphetamine costs 5,000 kyat (US \$3.67) while a mid-range pill costs 3,000 kyat (US \$2.20). The rich users don't buy a mid-range pill as it is bad quality. The 5,000-kyat pill is good quality,"* said Nai Kon Htaw.

Drug users in Yebyu range in age from 13 to 40 years of age, however, the majority of users are teenagers.

*"If there is a festive event in villages in Yebyu Township, I am 80% sure that*

*there must be drug use at the event. Even though drugs are widely spread in Yebyu, there is no drug control,"* continued Nai Kon Htaw.

According to a central committee member of the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the spread of drugs into Mon State has been huge. Drug use by young people has increased in every township of Mon State, including Thaton, Ye, and Thanbyuzayat.

For more information on the spread and impact of drugs on communities in Mon State and Mon areas of southeast Burma, see HURFOM's 'Bitter Pills: Breaking the silence surrounding the drug problem in Mon communities.'

News

# VILLAGERS OPPOSE LOCAL STONE MINING PROJECT NEAR HPA-AN



November 29, 2017

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, 30 villagers from Loon Nya village, Hpa-an Township, Karen State held a press conference in Hpa-an City to voice their opposition to a local stone mining project that may negatively affect the local environment and natural resources.

The stone mining project at Mount Loon Nya is a joint venture between the Chinese-owned China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and Chit Lin Myine Company, a local business owned by officials from a nearby Border Guard Force (BGF) battalion.

During the press conference, villagers accused the project of a lack of transparency and consultation.

*"We learned that the company set up machinery [at the project site]. If they really conduct a stone mining project, we, the locals, can't accept it because this mountain is a historic one. It's untouchable. We won't let it be destroyed,"* said Saw Hla Ngwe, a Loon Nya villager.

According to locals, Mount Loon Nya is a vital natural resource that provides seasonal foods and vegetables for the locals. Moreover, the mountain also has

rare species of wildlife and historic temples and caves. There is a natural blue pool at the base of the mountain which is very attractive to eco-tourists.

*"If they really do stone mining in our area, water resources will be destroyed and we, the villagers, will be in trouble,"* continued Saw Hla Ngwe. Locals are calling for greater transparency and consultation on the project.

This isn't the first time Mount Loon Nya has been the target of developers. In 2007, an unknown local enterprise began a small stone mining project. In 2012, an Indian company tried to gain approval from locals in order to establish a cement factory, but locals refused. Again, in 2016, another company who wanted to mine stone from the mountain for the ASEAN Road Project failed to get the locals' agreement.

At the press conference, local villagers announced that they had sent an appeal letter to the Karen State Government and relevant ministries and departments.

*"We're waiting to see how they respond to our letter. If they don't reply, we, all villagers, will organize a protest,"* said Saw Hla Ngwe.

According to Saw Thar Boe, a Program Coordinator at Karen Rivers Watch, Chit Lin Myine Company has already received permission from the Karen State Government for the project after they proposed conducting local development projects in the region.

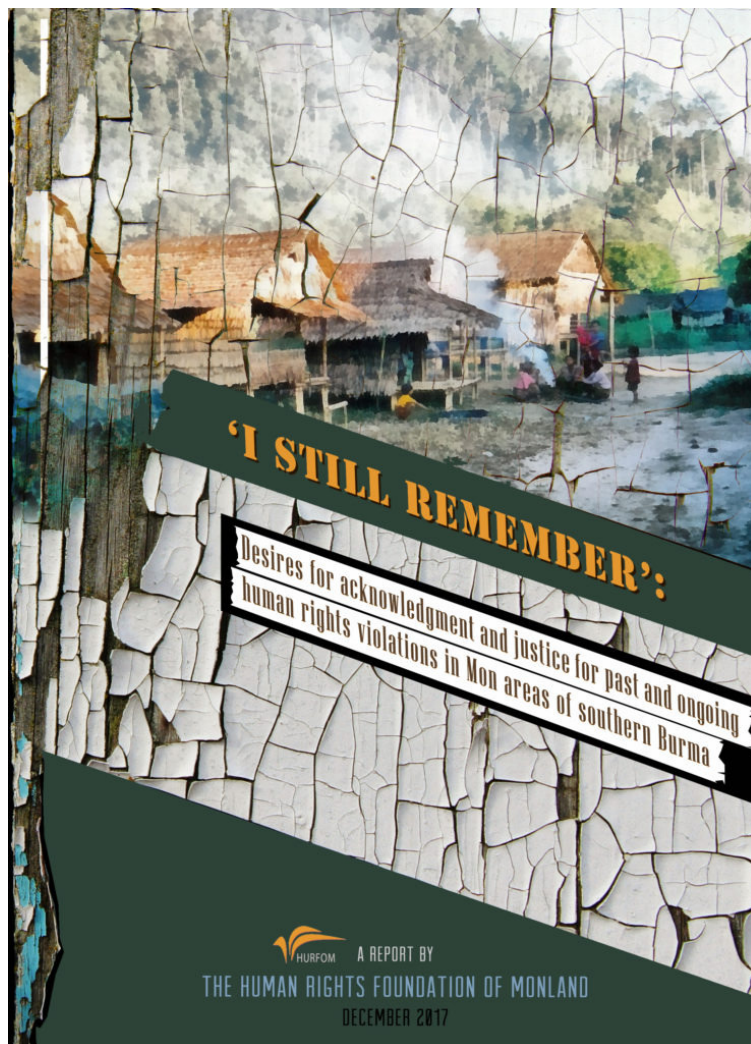
It was reported that CRBC and the Chit Lin Myine Company have already signed a three-year contract with prominent local monks for the stone mining project. They will produce 130,000 kyin (13,000,000 cubic feet) per year and the company will offer 2,000 kyat (US \$1.47) per kyin to a local development fund. Three days after signing the contract, the company had set up machinery nearby Mount Loon Nya.

*"We heard that they already got permission, but they haven't shown us any documents. Now they should conduct anEIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) as they want to do a megaproject. But now they are doing nothing. They don't follow legal procedures,"* said Saw Thar Boe.

Locals are worried as-as a small stone mining project on the east side of the mountain which operated for five years damaged water resources and vegetation in nearby villages

*We learned that the company set up machinery [at the project site]. If they really conduct a stone mining project, we, the locals, can't accept it because this mountain is a historic one. It's untouchable. We won't let it be destroyed,*

## HURFOM RELEASES “I STILL REMEMBER’: DESIRES FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND JUSTICE FOR PAST AND ONGOING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MON AREAS OF SOUTHERN BURMA”



December 10, 2017

In commemoration of International Human Rights Day, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) releases “*I Still Remember: Desires for acknowledgment and justice for human rights violations in Mon areas of southern Burma.*” [Download [Full Report](#) | [Brief Report](#) | [Brief in Burmese](#)]

Since Burma’s transition from a military government to a nominally civilian-led one beginning in 2010, ‘national reconciliation’ has become a ubiquitous concept amongst politicians and those advocating for peace in Burma after more than 60 years of civil war. With the National League for Democracy’s (NLD) historic electoral win in 2015, hope was further renewed for rebuilding Burma into a genuine democracy and uniting its fragmented society.

Yet, for all its usage by those in power, the rhetoric of ‘national reconciliation’ increasingly rings hollow. As press freedoms are curtailed and armed conflict and human rights violations continue unabated in northern Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan states, too little has changed in the intervening years since Burma embarked on its democratic transition. Rather than acknowledging Burma’s history of

past human rights violations, the current administration in Burma seems unwilling or unable to address its violent past, instead resorting to victim blaming when individuals are unable to forget the violence inflicted upon them.

The testimony gathered for this report shows that the majority of villagers interviewed in Mon State and Mon areas of southeast Burma not only are unable to forget the past, but do desire some form of justice for abuses endured over the past decades. In addition to providing evidence of the widespread and systematic violation of human rights by the Burma Army and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) since 1995, this report aims to present the voices of villagers and their desires for justice. In doing so, it counters the Burma government’s narrative that national reconciliation is possible without confronting its violent past and shows that the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms, particularly reparations, are necessary for the country to heal.

*“In southern Burma, there are tens of thousands of victims and survivors of past human rights abuses who have been ignored by all levels of government and some armed groups. In this report, we discuss how important mechanisms of transitional justice, such as reparations, are for achieving long-term, sustainable peace and reconciliation. For this to work, we must shift away from top-down approaches to focus on voices from the ground, which must be heard and heeded. The first-hand information gathered for this report provides an in-depth illustration for how bottom-up truth-telling and public healing can make a significant contribution to transitional justice and inform legal judgments for reparations in accordance with domestic and international legal obligations.”*

– Nai Aue Mon, Program Director

### Enquiries in Mon or Burmese:

Nai Aue Mon – Program Director, HURFOM

(+66) 086-167-9741, [auemon@rehmonnya.org](mailto:auemon@rehmonnya.org), [auemon@gmail.com](mailto:auemon@gmail.com)

### Enquiries in English:

Janeen Sawatzky – Senior Researcher, HURFOM

(+66) 097-265-7595, [janeen@rehmonnya.org](mailto:janeen@rehmonnya.org)

[Download [Full Report](#) | [Brief Report](#) | [Brief in Burmese](#)]

News

# MON STATE CHIEF MINISTER SETS DEADLINE FOR EMP REPORTS FOR RUBBER INDUSTRY



October 20, 2017

**HURFOM:** According to the Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan, October 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 is the final deadline for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) related to the rubber industry to submit their Environmental Management Plan (EMP) reports. The chief minister set the deadline after the Mon State government met with several SME owners on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2017.

*"We've already met with the owners of the businesses. Some [local] people have made complaints about these businesses to the government, so parliament approved the proposal [that they must submit their EMP reports]. The government must manage to fulfill the desire of the people. Our main target is to make sure that they submit their report in order to reveal how they manage their businesses in order not to damage the environment,"* said Dr. Min Kyi Win, the Minister of Natural

Resources and Environmental Conservation.

There are thirty-two SMEs in Mon State that are related to the rubber industry, including the rubber plywood and lumber industry. Due to the nearby location of these businesses to villages and towns and the strong odors emitted by them, locals concerned about the health ramifications of these emissions have lodged complaints with the Mon State government.

During the recent seventh session of the Mon State Parliament, the chief minister stated that SMEs that have not followed the procedures in their EMPs must be closed. The government announced their plan to fund 'the construction of hi-tech and modernized rubber industries' in Mon State and that those industries must also be supervised according to their adherence to their submitted EMPs.

*"Yone Shin and Fuji Industries in Mudon [Township] have produced very bad odors. Not only the residents, but even the travelers who use the main road have to cover their noses and mouths [when they pass through]. We heard that there will be changes, but we don't know exactly if the industries [have to] move. The owners of the industries have just been doing the same as what they always do,"* said Nai Blai of Kwan Tar village, Mudon Township, who sells rubber slices to Yone Shin Industries.



*We've already met with the owners of the businesses. Some [local] people have made complaints about these businesses to the government, so parliament approved the proposal [that they must submit their EMP reports]. The government must manage to fulfill the desire of the people. Our main target is to make sure that they submit their report in order to reveal how they manage their businesses in order not to damage the environment,*



## News

# YE CITY POLICE ACCUSED OF LACK OF TRANSPARENCY OVER HANDLING OF RAPE CASE

December 4, 2017

**WCRP:** A survivor of sexual violence is upset with the Ye City Police over the lack of transparency in the handling of her case. At approximately 11 pm on September 13<sup>th</sup> 2017, 50-year-old Than Htike, a migrant fisherman from Yangon, entered the 25-year-old disabled woman's house in Karot Karae village, Andin village tract, and raped her while her husband was out night fishing. The victim's family reported the case to the Ye City Police Station two days later.

On September 15<sup>th</sup> the perpetrator was arrested after the victim, Ma K—, complied with police requests and underwent a medical exam at the Ye City Hospital. The perpetrator was charged under Myanmar Penal Code Section #376 (punishment for rape) and Penal Code #511 (punishment for attempting to commit an offence).

According to Daw Chone, Chair of the Andin chapter of the Mon Women's Organization (MWO), even though the perpetrator has been arrested and charged over two months ago, the police have not yet informed them of the next steps.

*"We have not heard anything from the police yet. The victim is disabled and she can't walk very well and it is difficult for her to travel. If she goes somewhere she needs to go by truck. She has no money to spend on that. She can't even carry her baby. She also has financial problems, which prompted her neighbor to tell her not to follow or report her case. Moreover, the victim feels depressed as she has financial problems which make it difficult for her to continue her case,"* said Daw Chone.

Poverty is a major obstacle to accessing justice for villagers in Burma. Often survivors of sexual violence and their families are hesitant to report cases through formal legal channels, as time

and costs associated with travelling to more urban locations where courts are situated often preclude villagers from accessing state-level justice systems. This is exacerbated by the extended length of most legal proceedings, which may require dozens of trips over a period of years.

Ma K— was offered 500,000 kyat (US \$366.56) as compensation by the perpetrator's wife in exchange for dropping the case, however she rejected the money. *"Currently, MWO is helping me with my case. I have received some support and money from them, but I have used it for my family's living costs. I need to go to the police station by truck and I have difficulties for my travelling costs. I don't need compensation. I will be satisfied if the perpetrator receives punishment for his crime."*

On November 24<sup>th</sup> 2017, the local Andin village MWO chapter took the victim to meet and discuss about her case with Legal Clinic Myanmar (LCM) in Mawlamyine.

*"I would like to know whether the authorities will punish the perpetrator for his crime or not. I fear that he will be released without any punishment. I don't want him to live in the village anymore,"* said Ma K—.

Daw Chone stated, *"We don't want the perpetrator to be released. The victim will not be safe if the perpetrator is released after about a year of being detained. We fear that he will kill the victim and the person who reported him [to the police] after he is released. The victim is also worried about it."*

This is not the first time the perpetrator has been accused of sexual violence, having twice been accused of the attempted rape of a 40-year-old woman whose husband was also night fishing at the time. However, the woman declined to report her case.

For more information on challenges to accessing justice for survivors of sexual violence in Mon State and Mon areas of southeast Burma, see HURFOM's March 2017 report: [Cracks in the Silence](#).

*"We have not heard anything from the police yet. The victim is disabled and she can't walk very well and it is difficult for her to travel. If she goes somewhere she needs to go by truck. She has no money to spend on that. She can't even carry her baby. She also has financial problems, which prompted her neighbor to tell her not to follow or report her case. Moreover, the victim feels depressed as she has financial problems which make it difficult for her to continue her case,"*

News

# GROWING DEMAND FOR ELECTRICITY IN HOMES LEADING TO FREQUENT POWER OUTAGES, THANBYUZAYAT TOWNSHIP

November 10, 2017

HURFOM: Locals in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State are increasingly using electricity, leading to frequent power outages as the local grid is unable to cope with the growing demand. The issue is exacerbated by the already low voltage output of the Mon State Ministry of Electricity and Energy's local generator.

According to an official from the Thanbyuzayat Electricity Department they have stopped installing new meter boxes as the generator can no longer provide power to new applicants.

"We don't allow the installation of new meter boxes for those who want to use electricity [provided by the state]. As we don't have enough electrical power, we have banned new applicants for four months," said the official.

The Thanbyuzayat generator can provide 33,000 kVA(kilo-volt-ampere) and it sendsequal amounts of power

to three sub-generators in Kyaik Kha Mi, Pa Nga, and Wae Toon Chaung (Da Ton Chit).

"The power shutdownshappen automatically as the voltage is very low," said the official from the Thanbyuzayat Electricity Department. "The power shutdown doesn't happen because we stop the generator,rather it happens because of the very low voltage. The demand for electricity is increasing every day, but we can't upgrade our generator [quick enough]. So the generator can't provide for the growing demand and power shutdowns occur."

A new generator that will provide double the output of the current generator is being constructed by the department, which will relieve some of the stress on the electrical grid.

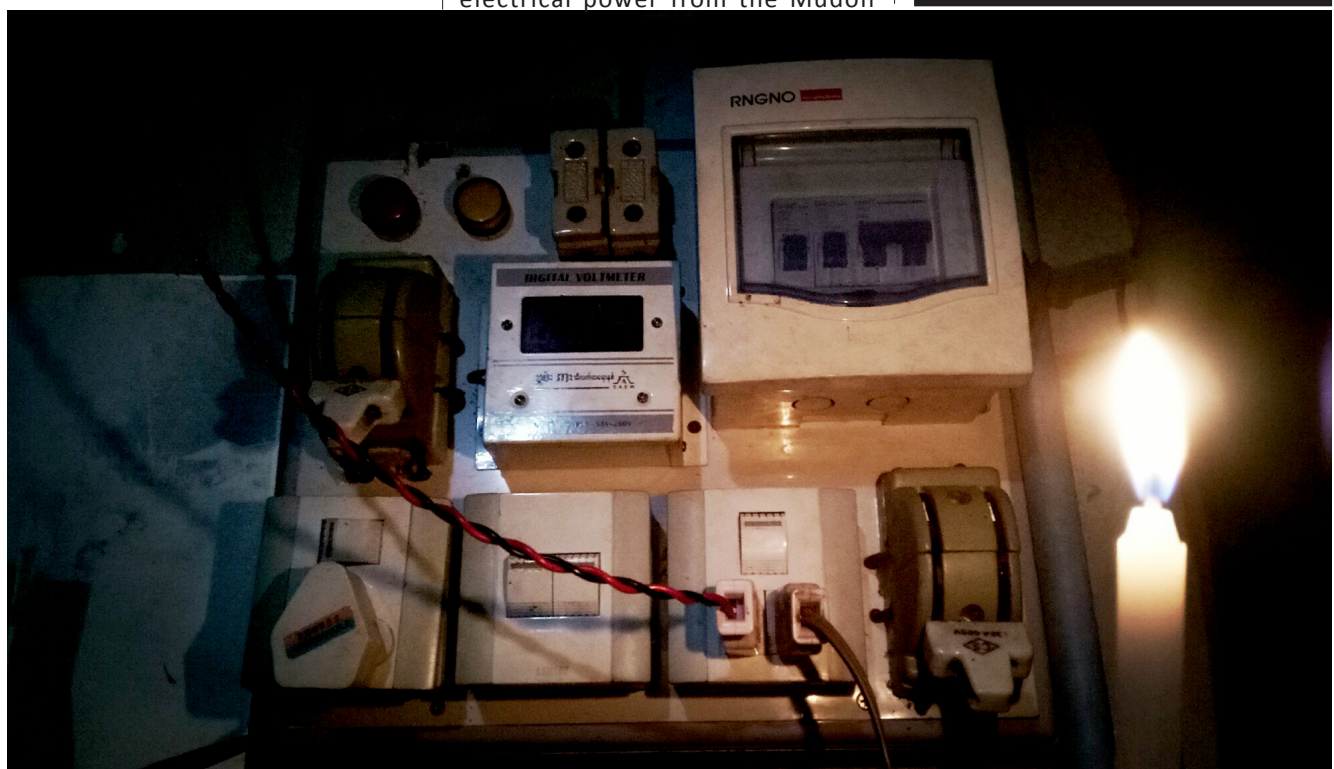
"Now the department has been setting up new a generator, but I can't say when it will be finished. In the past, the Thanbyuzayat generator requested electrical power from the Mudon

[Township] generator when it received high demand. The voltage is getting low as too many villages and households use electricity [now]," confirmed the official.

The new generator will receive electricity from the Mawlamyine generator and will provide 66,000 kVA which will suffice for Thanbyuzayat Township.

Because of the growing demand, the current Thanbyuzayat generator can provided electricity in a range from 130 to 150 V,however sometimes the voltage level drops down to only 100 V. Therefore, every household has to use their own electrical inverter in order to get 220 V of electricity.

"We don't allow the installation of new meter boxes for those who want to use electricity [provided by the state]. As we don't have enough electrical power, we have banned new applicants for four months,"



## News

# AUTHORITIES FROM MCL TO HOLD ANOTHER PUBLIC CONSULTATION OVER CEMENT FACTORY COMPLAINTS

November 22, 2017

**HURFOM:** On November 5th 2017, authorities from Mawlamyine Cement Limited (MCL) held a public consultation at the Dama Lawka monastery in Mawlamyine, Mon State, over complaints about its coal powered cement factory in Kyaikmayaw Township's Pyar Taung region. The discussion was attended by 20 community members from Kyaikmayaw Township and ten monks.

According to a representative from the Siam Cement Group (SCG) – who partners with MCL on the project – the purpose of their discussion with locals was to explain the use of coal to run the factory, and to provide locals with information on how to directly contact consultants on the project and their plans for community development in the area.

A monk who stands with Pyar Taung locals in their fight against MCL's cement factory explained, "We are not against the factory. We just don't want them to use coal in their factory. We did not know that the factory would include a coal plant to produce electricity. The company did not tell us anything like that. If the company uses other kinds of fuel instead of coal, locals would be in agreement [about the factory]."



The cement factory, which began full operations earlier this year, has generated large amounts of controversy and opposition amongst locals who say it has negatively affected their communities. Locals say that debris from explosions at the plant have destroyed villagers' farms and plantations and have caused damage to historical Buddhist images and caves. In addition, nearby villages have complained about health problems for residents using nearby water from the Attran river. Villagers are worried about the future of their environmental resources and are afraid runoff from the factory has contaminated the water.

According to Pyar Taung community leader Nai Ye Zaw, "The company [MCL] began running their factory before they even finished their environmental and social impact assessment (EIA/SIA) reports. Actually, they did not get permission from the government yet. That is unacceptable. Before, the company said that there would be no damage to the mountain, but in reality it has destroyed the mountain. The noise of their explosions is very loud and the authorities from the factory and locals have already discussed about it. The company said that they would fix it, but nothing has changed."

He added that, "We saw that the factory has dug a canal to the [Attran] river and the dirt [runoff] from the factory flows to the river. We would like them to solve this as well."

MCL has provided locals with one more consultation in mid-December and locals have raised four points for them to address: 1) to follow current environmental laws and rules; 2) to use clean alternatives to coal to power the factory; 3) to maintain and avoid polluting the Attran river; 4) to address issues about soil erosion and water displacement from passing cargo ships using the Attran river for transportation.

If the company agrees to these four points, locals would accept to join the discussion in the next consultation. Locals have requested that the discussion not be nearby the factory and that the MCL's decision-making authorities join the discussion.

 We saw that the factory has dug a canal to the [Attran] river and the dirt [runoff] from the factory flows to the river. We would like them to solve this as well. 

News

# THREATS, TRICKERY, AND ADMINISTRATIVE MISCONDUCT OVER PROPOSED STONE MINING PROJECT BY EXCELLENT FORTUNE DEVELOPMENT GROUP COMPANY IN YE TOWNSHIP

December 27, 2017

Conflict is brewing between local villagers and Excellent Fortune Development Group Company Ltd. (EFD) over a planned stone mining project in Khaw Zar Sub-township, Ye Township, Mon State. EFD is planning to buy land near Mount Bleh Patoi located between Dani Thakyar and Magyi villages.

*"We, the villagers of Dani Thakyar and Magyi villages, don't want to sell [the land near] the mountain to the company. We don't agree [to sell the land]. We don't want the mountain to be destroyed. If we sell the [land near the] mountain to the company, the plantations, farmland, and natural resources [nearby] will be destroyed and the local farmers will be in trouble,"* said Nai Seik Chan, a Magyi village resident.

Even though most of the villagers who reside in Dani Tajar village have agreed to sell their land to EFD, villagers who reside on the outskirts of Dani Thakyar, as well as Magyi village residents have

refused. On December 12<sup>th</sup> 2017, approximately 100 villagers signed a petition opposing the sale of land to EFD.

*"We haven't sold the land yet. But the company has been negotiating with the Abbot U Sanda Tarra and as far as we know, the Abbot has agreed to sell,"* said U S—, a young monk from the Magyi Monastery.

According to him, the villagers from Dani Thakyar who agreed to sell their land for the local project did so out of respect for Abbot Sanda Tarra, who was born in Dani Thakyar.

*"Not all villagers in Dani Thakyar have agreed to sell the land, but they have to because their venerable Abbot has decided to sell the [land near the] mountain to the company. They are also afraid of the Abbot's brother who was a bandit and former member of a Mon splinter group. He has threatened the villagers, so they have to agree to sell their land,"* continued U S—.

Previously, on November 28<sup>th</sup> 2017, Dani Tajar resident Nai Tun Saung,

organized local villagers to construct a road into the village. However, in reality, the volunteers were tricked into clearing land that is slated to be sold to EFD. An argument erupted between the villagers and Nai Tun Saung. One local villager who argued with the Dani Thakyar village administrator over the use of village labor for the benefit of EFD was forced to apologize and fined 100,000 kyat (US \$73.86).

Local villagers in this area rely on betel nut and coconut plantations for their livelihoods. The outskirts of Dani Thakyar consists of 15 houses, while Dani Thakyar proper has approximately 100 households. Magyi village has more than 200 houses. As the disagreement between the villagers regarding the land issue heats up, local villagers are worried about possible conflict amongst them.

On December 20<sup>th</sup> 2017, local villagers sent a petition letter to Daw Tin Ei, the Speaker of the Mon State Parliament, requesting a stop to the misconduct in the wake of EFD's proposed stone mining project.



## 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](mailto:info@rehmonnya.org)

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

With regards,

Director

Human Rights Foundation of Monland

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE TOWARDS CHILDREN IN MON STATE CONTINUES, AS 11-YEAR-OLD GIRL RAPED

December 26, 2017

WCRP: On October 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, an 11-year-old girl in Kaw Hla village, Mudon Township, Mon State, was raped by a 42-year-old man.

At approximately 1 pm, the perpetrator and the girl left to go fix the child's mobile phone without telling her parents. The girl was taken by the perpetrator to some brush nearby the railway station in Mainka Nain village where she was then raped. The perpetrator threatened that we would kill her if she told her family and that he would buy her a new phone if she remained silent. At around 5 pm, the perpetrator took the girl back to where her parents were working in Min Hla village.

As soon as the girl arrived, her mother noticed that something was wrong and

asked her what happened. However, the girl did not disclose her ordeal. After her parents finished working for the day, they came back home and found a leech on her body and asked her to tell the truth. She told her parents that she was raped by U Win Kyine. The victim's parents reported the incident to the village administrator.

U Win Kyine was arrested and detained at the village administrator's office, after which the Mudon Police were contacted. A female police officer, Khin Maung Tun, was dispatched to investigate the case in accordance with police rules and regulations.

During the investigation, police asked the perpetrator to show them the location of the assault and took the clothes of both the victim and perpetrator into evidence.

The perpetrator was transferred to the Mudon Police Station and was charged under Burma Penal Code Article #376 (Punishment for Rape) on October 26<sup>th</sup>. The perpetrator has yet to appear in court.

The day after the assault, the girl was transported to Mawlamyine Hospital for a medical examination. According to a person close to the girl, the Women's Association from Kyaikmayaw Township and members from the Mon State Hluttaw Women and Children's Rights Committee are supporting the victim and her family.

Burma has seen a **significant rise** in the number of reported cases of sexual violence toward children. For more information on this and challenges to accessing justice for survivors of sexual violence in Mon State and Mon areas of Burma, see '[Cracks in the Silence](#)'

## CHILDREN FROM POOR FAMILIES MORE LIKELY TO FACE ABUSE: MON HLUTTAW WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE



December 4, 2017

**WCRP:** Children from poor families are more likely to face sexual abuse and labor exploitation, according to Daw Khine Khine Lei, Chair of the Mon State Parliament's Women and Children's Rights Committee (WCRC). Some of the most common reports received by the committee pertain to cases of sexual violence against children and child labor. Her comments came during the ceremony for the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) held on November 19<sup>th</sup> 2017 in Pa Ouk village, Mawlamyine Township, Mon State.

Daw Khin Than Htwe, Chair of the Mon State Women and Children Upgrade Committee (MWCUC) added, "children are being forced to drop out of school and some are going to the [Thai-Burma] border to find jobs. Actually, when we investigated this, some children weren't receiving a proper wage. The children are happy with their wages and do not even know they are being exploited. The children's parents also accept the low wages their children receive, even if it is only 2,000 (US \$1.47) or 3,000 kyat (US \$2.20) [per day]. We can see in our community that there are lots of school-age children dropping out and working to fight for their livelihoods."

According to the data collected by MWCUC, Daw Khin Than Htwe estimates approximately 60% of children in Mon State are forced to drop out of school due to livelihood issues.

She added, "[As parents are often working abroad they] send money to the person who cares for their child's education, health, and daily expenses, but those people do not let the child attend school and send them to work at a tea shop. I helped one case in Chaungzone Township where a child's relative sent the child to work at a tea shop [for approximately a year], taking 700,000 kyat (US \$512.42) for the child's wages from the tea shop owner."

In June 2015, The Woman and Child Rights Project (WCRP), a Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) initiative, published "Inaccessible and Under-resourced: Concerns over education in rural Mon communities." The report draws on interviews with 146 individuals in 17 predominantly Mon villages in Ye, Kyar Inn Seik Kyi, and Yebyu to present an exploration of education challenges in rural Mon areas. The report found that education largely remains inaccessible for children from poor families and that schools are chronically under-resourced.

In addition, the report found that over a third of children were forced to drop out of school as they needed to work in order to supplement their family's income. "There are 280 children who need to attend the school but only 235 join the school and the others have to help their family for their livelihood and can't attend the school," said a teacher from east Wai Thar Lee village, Kyar Inn Seik Kyi Township, Karen State.

"For problems happening to children, the children's courts are supported by the Child Law in order to properly solve children's issues. Case Myanmar has already been established to document children's issues," said Daw Khine Khine Lei.

Currently, there are four Case Myanmar staff from the Mon State Social Welfare Office that are active in Mawlamyine and Thanbyuzayat townships. Their goal is to conduct surveys in Mon State's ten townships and report on children's issues

...

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

PRINTED MATTER