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## Iron ore mine could destroy 7000 in Shan state of Myanmar

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Burma Newscasts reported that Russian and Italian engineering companies are reported to be involved in the development of a huge iron ore mine in Burma's eastern Shan state that campaigners say could displace more than 7,000 homes.

The already volatile Shan state is home to Burma's second largest iron ore deposit, on the site of Mount Pinpet. Excavation of the site began in 2004, and work includes the conversion of around 11,000 acres of surrounding land for construction of a cement factory and iron processing plant.

The Pa-O Youth Organization in a report released said that more than 25 villages' home to around 7000 mainly ethnic Pa-O people could be destroyed by the Pinpet Mining Project.

Robbing the Future report said that "Fifty people have already been forced to move and were not adequately compensated. The confiscation of vital farmlands has begun, leaving over 100 families without the primary source of their livelihood and sustenance."

Mr Khun Ko Wein spokesperson from PYO said that villagers had very little, if any input on the plans for the project. He said that "The government doesn't talk to the villagers, they don't negotiate with the villagers regarding plans for the mining project, and they don't really discuss in advance what they are going to do."

The report points to Russian company Tyazhpromexport as being the major foreign investor in the Pinpet Iron Factory, with USD 150 million so far channeled into the project.

Another concern of PYO's is the link between the Pinpet mine and rumors that Burma is mining uranium, a key ingredient for nuclear weaponry.

According to the report, Burma's Ministry of Energy has officially announced the presence of five uranium deposits in the country, although has not publicly stated that these will be mined. Speculation that uranium exists near the Pinpet site has added fuel to the rumors, with some locals fearing that the mine could be being used as a cover to exploit and refine uranium. Such rumors have been further compounded by growing evidence that Burma is strengthening its ties with North Korea, who last month successfully tested a nuclear bomb.

(Sourced from Burma Newscasts)

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