

HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

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Khin Su Wai 14 Nov 2016



Farmers in Sagaing Region's Htigyaing township stage a protest against the Tagaung Taung nickel mine on November 10. Photo: Supplied Sagaing Region farmers demand land back from factory

About 300 farmers in Sagaing Region's Htigyaing township protested a longstanding feud with a Chinese-backed nickel-processing plant on November 10, claiming that the factory confiscated their lands without proper compensation.

The farmers have been protesting against the company since 2012, without result.

The Tagaung Taung <u>nickel mine signed a contract</u> with China Nonferrous Metal Mining Co (CNMC) in Nay Pyi Taw in 2007. The project entailed the seizure of more than 3000 acres (1200 hectares) of land with crop compensation of K50,000 an acre payable to 122 farmers – including 17 who had registered their land – in five villages of Maung Kone village tract.

This year, in September, farmers submitted their complaints to the Union and regional governments, and <u>sent a letter to State Counsellor</u> Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with questions about job creation, land compensation, solid waste pollution, the dismissal of the factory boss, and issues around the transportation of coal from Maung Kone port.

"The local authorities told us this was forest land. But before the Tagaung forest area was recognised, our ancestors farmed those lands," Sagaing Region Farmers Association executive member U Nay Win told *The Myanmar Times* in September.

On September 20, 95 of the concerned 122 farmers met the local authorities and the company, but did not appear to reach an agreement.

The local MP, U Thein Han (NLD; Htigyaing 2), said that one of the main problems in resolving the dispute is that the contested territory is considered protected forest area.



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