



# SHAN

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION

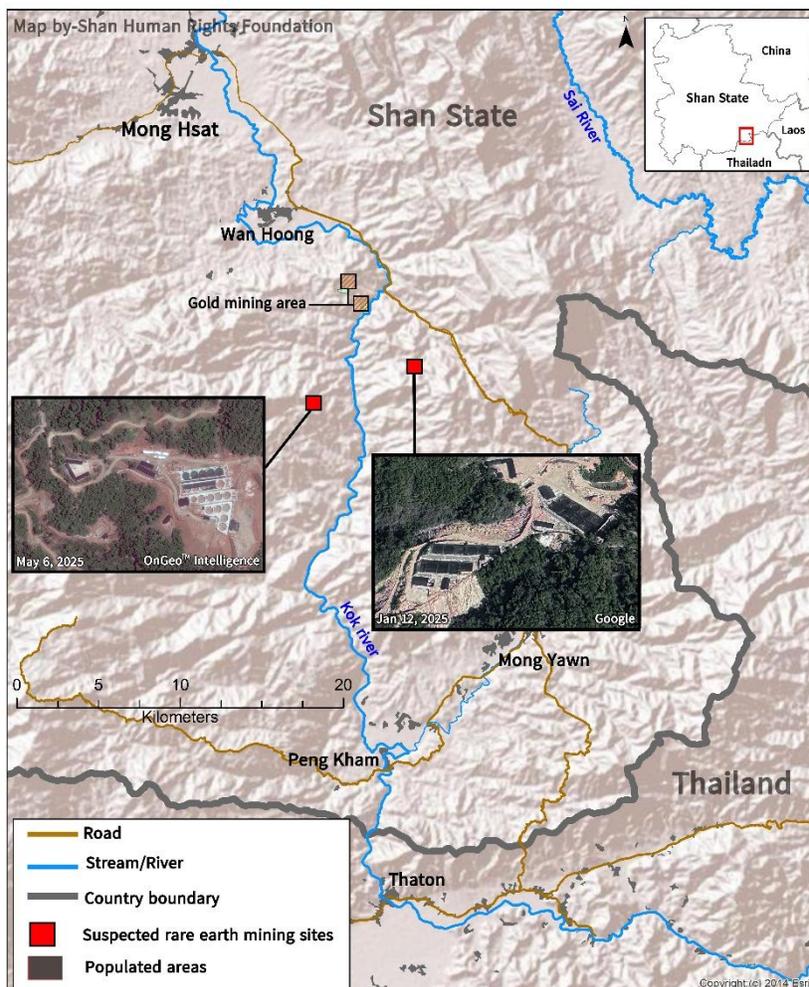
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### Update: Satellite imagery indicates rare earth mining in southern Mong Hsat only 25 kms from Thai border

Satellite images indicate that rare earth mining is taking place in two locations in Mong Yawn, southern Mong Hsat, about 25 kilometers from the northern Thai border, opposite Mae Ai district of Chiang Mai province. It is feared that toxic residue from the rare earth mines is contaminating water sources entering the Kok River, with dangerous impacts on the health of over a million people living downstream on both sides of the border.

Suspected rare earth mining sites in southern Mong Hsat, Shan State





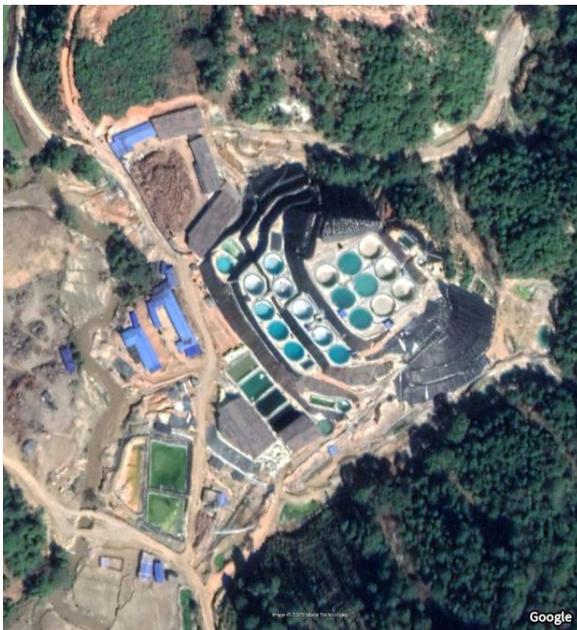
*Suspected rare earth mining site, 2.6 kms west of Kok River*



*Suspected rare earth mining site, 3.6 kms east of Kok River  
(The processing pools appear to be covered by black netting)*

The layout of the mining sites shown in the satellite images, with rows of circular processing pools, is the same as the layout of rare earth mining sites in Kachin State, where large amounts of terbium (Tb) and dysprosium (Dy) are mined by Chinese companies.

The type of rare earth mining in Kachin State is the extremely environmentally destructive “[in situ leaching](#)” method, involving pouring chemicals through pipes into hills to leach out the rare earths. The chemical solution is then piped into pools, where further chemicals are added to extract the rare earth.



*Rare earth mining site in Kachin State*



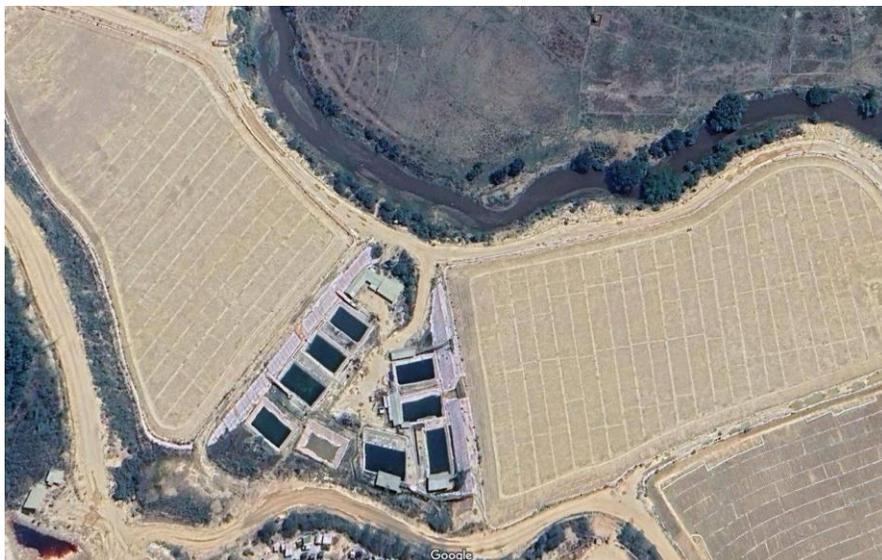
*Suspected rare earth mining site west of Kok River, Mong Yawn*

Historical satellite images show that the rare earth mining 3.6 kilometers east of the Kok River started since mid-2023, and the rare earth mining 2.6 kilometers west of the Kok River started since mid-2024.

Until now, media attention has focused on the gold mining taking place along the Kok River in Mong Yawn. The satellite images of the gold mining/processing near the Kok River show a different layout from the suspected rare earth mining sites. Satellite images of gold leaching sites along the Sai River in eastern Mong Hsat also show a different layout.



*Gold mining/processing near Kok River, southern Mong Hsat*



*Gold leaching site near Sai River, eastern Mong Hsat*

The damage to the environment and health of communities living near the rare earth mines in Kachin State is already well documented. The underground leaching has caused land collapse and poisoned ground and surface water, killing fish and wildlife and contaminating crops.

The rare earth mines in Mong Yawn are likely already releasing harmful substances into the Kok River, worsening the existing contamination from gold mining, which is threatening the health of communities living along the river in southern Shan State and northern Thailand. In Thailand, the Kok River flows from Thaton, Mae Ai district of Chiang Mai, across Chiang Rai province, entering the Mekong River at Chiang Saen district.

This rare earth mining and its potential transborder impacts are a matter of grave concern, requiring urgent investigation by authorities on both sides of the border, and public disclosure of all information related to the mining. Mong Yawn, where the rare earth mines are located, is under the joint control of Burma's military regime and the United Wa State Army.

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