

# **KAOWAO NEWS NO. 129**

**Newsletter for social justice and freedom in Burma  
June 4-19, 2007**

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**MAU building Mon community development strategies**  
Kaowao: June 19, 2007

Mon Affairs Union, or MAU, is preparing to hold a Mon international gathering and organizing regional meetings in four areas.

Thai-Burma border based MAU organizer Nai Baen told participants during the Mon weekly teleconference that the Organizing Committee of the MAU have decided to call regional meetings by early July.

“Our work in this area has developed over the past few years,” said Nai Baeng. “We are seeking the advice and support of the participants during our regional meetings which will be held by early July,” he added at the weekly teleconference of the OMCC (overseas Mon Coordinating Committee) on June 17.

The regional meetings will be held in the 4 areas that cover the Mon living overseas, in Thailand, on the border, and inside Monland. The upcoming regional meetings will select not more than 30 representatives from their respected areas and 15 delegates from each for a wider conference. The Mon conference is expected to be held by the end of this year but the location has not been revealed.

The MAU was formed as the result of Mon National Conferences held over the last two years in 2005 and 2006. The Mon National Conferences were sponsored by the New Mon State Party and attended by several delegates including women, community leaders, youth, religious leaders and those from overseas.

“It is important to strengthen the MAU now to represent all Mons at the regional and international level,” said Nai Mon Chan, the representative from the Australia Mon Association (AMA) based in Canberra.

Nai Chan Toi (New Mon State Party), Nai Damrong (Thai Mon leader), Nai Bhaeng (Thai Burma border) and Ms. Sardar (Mon Women Organization) are leading members of the MAU.

“Our goal is to identify and interact with people that have difference of opinions to promote strategic thinking and come up with new initiatives to build community. We are also focusing on getting to know each other, share ideas and work together to strengthen our communities, our top priority,” commented Nai Hongsar, a senior leader of the New Mon State Party.

The former umbrella organization of the Mon people, Mon Unity League (MUL), changed its strategy to focus more on promoting civil society, developing programs, and informing policy, rather than taking a political stance during its strategic meeting held on the Thai-Burma border in February.

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### **Curfew leaves villagers facing economic difficulties**

Kaowao: June 13, 2007

Ye -- The Burma Army issued a curfew after a visit to Brong (TuMyaung) village by an armed group led by Chan Dein.

The SPDC's Burma Army is barring local villagers from traveling to their farms and gardens since June 7<sup>th</sup> in southern Ye, Mon State. The village headman from Hangam stated that the Burma Army's reasoning behind this action was a fear that the villagers will return to their farms and support the guerilla forces.

Although an ambush by the Mon guerrilla group has not occurred for some time, the SPDC has accused villagers of supporting the Mon guerilla group and issued a curfew in the area that included large villages such as Hamgam.

The village headmen were ordered to block entry to all gates after 6 p.m., a move cited by the village headman as problematic both socially and economically.

The Burma Army ordered villages from Ham Gam to Magyee (Maenglon) to guard each of the tracks by forming a group of guards. Four people form a team every night and the villagers rotate the schedule to ensure the village is watched throughout the night. They are required to signal every hour; however, the Army has failed to provide them with weapons for protection. If they fail to send the hourly signal or inform the Burma Army of any suspicious activities they are fined.

Southern Mon State suffers most from an high incidence of human rights abuses by the SPDC junta, including the conscription of forced labour, portering, and the confiscation of productive land owned by hundreds of families. Many people have left this rural area and are now living as internally displaced persons and refugees in need of food and medical attention.

In 2002 the Burma Army designated the area as a black zone to launch offensives at Mon insurgents and villagers are restricted to visit their farms and tend to their fields.

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### **Burmese authorities seize illegal cars**

Kaowao: June 10, 2007

Local Burmese authorities at the Three Pagodas Pass border town have seized more than 100 vehicles. A team was formed to check all vehicles and launch further action to confiscate unlicensed vehicles.

According to a source close to the SPDC, the committee was formed on June 8, comprised of Police Officer Kyaw Tha, Burma Army commander, Lt. Col Hla Min and custom officers.

The order came from the Capital, Nay Pyi Daw and the team will check all vehicles that are operating in the border town. However, the vehicles used for the community that belongs to organizations and cease-fire groups will be exempt.

A town businessman said there are over 100 unlicensed vehicles in the border town and Ramanya Co. Ltd owns about 80. The cease-fire New Mon State Party registered the Ramanya Co. Ltd after it reached the deal with the SPDC in 1995.

The crackdown on unlicensed vehicles has occurred often in the past two years, this one started in late May. The authorities have pulled drivers off the road and seized their cars, while other drivers gave up their cars. About 110 vehicles were

confiscated in Ye, Mudon, Thanbyu Zayat, Kyaik Maya of Mon State in the past 2 weeks.

Meanwhile, the SPDC at the border town is worried that their senior officers will investigate and take further action against them on corruption including their businesses in illegal logging at the border town.

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## **ENC ON ITS LOBBY MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES**

By Elaisa Vahnje, Chinland Guardian

June 9, 2007 -- Washington DC: The Ethnic Nationalities Council of Union of Burma (ENC) is on its lobby mission here in Washington DC to seek the United States support for its struggle for democracy and federalism in the Union of Burma. The ENC delegation held a series of meetings with Congressmen, Senators, and high ranking officers from State Department and other departments and organizations.

The delegation included ENC top leaders Mr. Harn Yawngwe, senior advisor, Dr. Lian Sakhong, General Secretary, Saw David Taw, Joint Secretary, and Dr. Sui Khar, a Chin representative, Saya Naing, a Mon representative, U Hla Phe, an Arakan representative, Naw K'nyaw Paw, a Karen representative, and Moe Moe Aung, a Karenni representative.

They covered a wide range of issues at the meeting with seven congressmen including Joseph Pitts, and five senators including Richard Lugar and Edward M. Kennedy.

In an informal meeting held with the Burmese Community in National Capital area, Dr. Sein Win, Prime Minister of the National Coalition Government of Union of Burma (NCGUB), says the NCGUB believes that ethnic rights and democracy is equally important right from here in the process of re-establishing federal based democracy in the Union of Burma. "We welcome you (ENC) and support your mission", says the Prime Minister.

Saw David Taw, one of the leading team members says we have come here to seek the American Government continually reorganization and support for the tripartite-dialogue in Burma as a mean to solve the country political crisis which is supported by the United Nations resolution.

In his talk, Mr. Harn Yawngwe, Director of Euro-Burma Office focuses on why the international community role is very important to bring about change in

Burma. When asked if he believes we [democratic forces] can win China and Russia support, he says “we do not see China and Russia as our enemy because of they vetoed Burma agenda at United Nations Security council early this year. But we see it as a chance to develop our friendship between us, and we know that there is a way to get support from them. We will continue to work with them”.

Dr. Lian Sakhong, General Secretary of ENC and co-chair of Federal Constitution Drafting Committee says that many people misunderstand ENC is only for Ethnic Nationalities. In reality, ENC is working for all stake holders in the Union of Burma for restoration of Federalism”.

A delegation is scheduled to have a meeting on 11 June with Ibrahim A Gambari, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Burma at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. They will also be meeting with some international organizations and participate in informal briefing at UN in the following days.

The Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC) was originally established in August 2001. It was entrusted with the task of fostering unity and cooperation between all ethnic nationalities in preparation for a “Tripartite Dialogue” and a transition to democracy in Burma.

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### **Suu Kyi motion passed in Canadian Parliament**

Kaowao: June 8, 2007

The Canadian House of Commons called for the immediate release of Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday.

Hon. Larry Bagnell, Chair of Parliamentary Friends of Burma (PFOB), submitted the motion and secured all parties support in advance before the motion was tabled in the Canadian Parliament.

“We are very proud to announce that our motion requesting the Burmese Government to release Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest was passed with the unanimous consent of the House. This may be a small step towards democracy in Burma but it is a step, nonetheless, and Canada will continue to do what it can to see that it happens,” said Hon. Larry. Bagnell,

The Parliamentary Friends of Burma was launched in December, 2006 in support of democracy and human rights in Burma, and currently consists of 28 Members and Senators from all parties of the Canadian Parliament.

The motion stated that the House of Commons request the Burmese government to release the Leader of the National League for Democracy and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, from house arrest, which has been imposed on her since 1989.”

Canadian Friends of Burma or CFOB, based in Ottawa, is actively launching campaign for a democratic change in Burma among the Canadian politicians and policy makers.

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### **MYPO: Empowering Youth on the Border**

Kaowao: June 4, 2007

Sangkhalaburi -- Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO) conducted a youth exchange to discuss educational development on the Thai-Burma border, as well as to utilize the educational abilities of youth and urge them to establish basic literacy programs in their communities.

During the exchange, participants expressed ideas and asked questions. Nai Lyeh Rot, the guest speaker, responded to questions, allowing those present to gain a deeper understanding of the issues.

"In order to strengthen educational development in each community, youth in that community must take charge. They are role models for their generation," said Nai Rot.

"We believe that urging youth to actively participate in promoting literacy in their communities will be the best approach to basic community empowerment and development," added the director of the Youth Exchange Program.

The exchange on June 2 involved 20 youth from five local youth organizations. MYPO started the Youth Exchange Program in 2000 with the aim of sharing information and knowledge among youth. Their goal is to upgrade the capacity of youth in different areas of Mon State. It is one of the MYPO's youth capacity-building initiatives.

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## **Interim Thai PM pledges to eradicate 'cancer of corruption' to bring democracy**

By GRANT PECK,

AP: BANGKOK, Thailand, June 9, 2007 -- The "cancer" of corruption must be eradicated from Thailand if the country is ever to become a thriving democracy, the military-installed prime minister said Sunday.

Surayud Chulanont was appointed prime minister after a bloodless coup last September ousted his elected predecessor Thaksin Shinawatra.

"We as a nation will not achieve good and honest government if we allow corruption and disregard for the rule of law to continue," Surayud said in a speech broadcast nationwide on radio and television.

Surayud said that during Thaksin's administration, "the rule of law came under fierce attack from the powerful, the rich and cronies. Corruption washed through our government."

Democracy is defined not only by majorities at the polls, but also by equal justice under the law, Surayud said - adding his voice to the country's most volatile political debate that began early last year, when thousands of protesters took to the streets accusing Thaksin of corruption and abuse of power.

Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party won successive sweeping election victories by relying on Thailand's rural majority, which gave its support in return for populist policies that provided them with financial and social welfare benefits.

"I believe we all understand that if we want a better life for all the citizens of our beloved nation, then we must eradicate this cancer called corruption by every means possible, but especially by strengthening the rule of law," he said.

"Only by taking this path can democracy flourish and deliver its promised benefits of equal opportunities for all our citizens," said Surayud.

His speech came at a critical political juncture, as the finishing touches are being made on a new constitution that will be submitted to a national referendum before an election is held, probably in December.

Surayud's interim government has failed to prove corruption allegations against Thaksin, has had a run of embarrassing policy flops, and has yet to restore some civil liberties suspended during the coup.

Then, on May 30, the Constitutional Court found Thai Rak Thai guilty of violating election laws, ordered the party dissolved, and barred its leadership from public office for five years.

Surayud praised some of Thai Rak Thai's populist policies and said they would be continued.

"Some of (Thai Rak Thai's) major policies will become permanent features of our society, for example, universal access to affordable health care," he said. "For these good policies we should thank the Thai Rak Thai Party, even as we accept the tribunal's verdict to dissolve the party for serious wrongdoing."

About 13,000 opponents of the military-installed government gathered Saturday evening at a field in the capital Bangkok traditionally used for political protests. Most in the crowd appeared to be Thaksin supporters.

No violence was reported as about 3,000 demonstrators then marched several kilometers (miles) to the military's headquarters in their most defiant protest yet against the regime, which came to power after the coup d'etat last September.

Surayud told Thai Rak Thai supporters Sunday "your voices have been heard," and "your grievances put at the top of the nation's agenda."

"In the next general election, I am sure you will find candidates ... who will continue to work for the improvement of your lives," Surayud said.

Surayud said his interim government would prosecute corruption cases vigorously, close legal loopholes that allow corruption to flourish, and reform the justice system - particularly the police department.

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## **Environment**

### **We're Nearing Climate's Tipping Point**

By P. H. Liotta: 09 June, 2007

The Providence Journal

Mark Twain once quipped that "everybody talks about the weather, but nobody ever does anything about it." While Twain's remarks were tongue-in-cheek, they took on resonance in the wake of NASA Administrator Michael Griffin's recent comments on National Public Radio regarding climate change. Griffin stated: "I

have no doubt that a trend of global warming exists,” but he added that he was “not sure that it is fair to say that is a problem we must wrestle with.”

Griffin’s remarks garnered attention, largely negative, when he suggested that “I would ask which human beings, where and when, are to be accorded the privilege of deciding that this particular climate that we have right here today, right now, is the best climate for all other human beings. I think that’s a rather arrogant position for people to take.” Michael Oppenheimer, professor at Princeton, claimed he found “it astounding that the head of a major U.S. science agency could hold such attitudes — basically ignorance — about the global warming problem. In fact, it’s so astonishing I think he should resign.”

James Hansen, climate scientist and director of NASA’s Goddard Institute, was equally direct in critiquing his boss: “I almost fell off my chair. [His remarks were] remarkably uninformed.” Notably, Hansen and other scientists from the Goddard and Columbia University had just released a report that stated that human-made greenhouse gases have brought the Earth’s climate close to a critical “tipping point.” With the release of the Fourth Assessment Report of the U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (of which this author is a member), the scientific data provides irrevocable evidence that change is taking place.

It is immensely difficult to talk with any certainty or sense of prediction about climate change — more commonly (and incorrectly) called just “global warming.” The complexities of environmental change have widely different impacts in different regions and are often interwoven with vulnerabilities such as disease, water and natural-resource scarcities, increased storms and flooding in some areas, with extreme temperatures and extended drought in other areas.

With the continuing failure of decision makers to deal with climate change and its impact, we are entering a future from which we may not be able to turn back. Indeed, the last time in history carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels were at levels similar to today’s was during the time of the mid-Pliocene “warm” period — some 3.5 million years ago. As one NASA scientist jokingly retorted to the science journalist Elizabeth Kolbert, “It’s true that we’ve had higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels before. But, then, of course, we also had dinosaurs.”

Phenomenal natural disasters — from volcanic eruptions to seismic quakes to massive tsunami effects and giant hurricanes — should serve to remind us that the Earth itself is the ultimate weapon of mass destruction. Today, when mollusks are found growing only several hundred miles from the North Pole, or entire species are in permanent migratory pattern change, or butterflies throughout the Northern Hemisphere are shifting ranges northward by up to 150 miles, or predatory insects or plants begin to invade ecosystems or undermine biodiversity, or polar bears

drown because of the loss of surface ice, then all is not well. One has, at such point, reached a “tipping point”: commonly described through the visual anecdote of leaning over in a canoe to the extent that one is no longer “rocking the boat” but flipping it — and from which there can be no recovery.

In the 1970s James Lovelock made an intellectual leap by suggesting the possibility the Earth’s lands, oceans, atmosphere and living matter could be seen as a single organism, one that regulated itself to support life. Called the “Gaia Hypothesis” after the ancient Greeks’ Earth Goddess, it was in many respects a new way of looking at the world. And it was an idea that was as evocative as it was controversial. In part, it repositioned the role of the physical scientist into that of a physiologist. Whereas before there was the studying of processes that responded to natural forces, now there would be the looking for functions that served a larger body.

While it may be trite to suggest that “it’s not nice to fool with Mother Nature,” it is not inaccurate to suggest that human influences such as ever increasing greenhouse-gas emissions and subsequent effects on climate and security could very well cause “Gaia” to seek her revenge. The time for debate is long past. Perhaps we should pray that the time for effective action has not passed as well.

*P. H. Liotta is executive director of the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy at Salve Regina University, and the coauthor of Gaia’s Revenge: Climate Change and Humanity’s Loss. The Pell Center hosted an international conference on environmental change this week, with support from NATO, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the United Nations.*

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### **Announcement**

#### **AEIOU is Calling for Volunteer Manager**

All Ethnic International Open University is calling for a volunteer Manager with a monthly honorarium ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 Bahts, couple with a residence at one of the hostels.

He/she

- must be a Thai Citizen
- must sign up one year contract (no leave except for emergency)
- must speak three to four languages English, Thai, Burmese and one of the Burmese ethnic languages

- must clearly know the history of 8888 and the gross human rights violations going on in Burma
- must be computer literate and drive a vehicle (motor cycle or car)
- must know the mentality of a Refugee, IDP, Migrant Workers and the Burmese youths inside Burma
- must know the Thai laws and the local VIPS
- must know the background political scene of Burma and Thailand.
- must not drink or smoke and have a good moral character
- must be able to work at odd hours if emergency arises

His/Her duties will have to look over the entire general administration including the welfare of the students, hostels, health, security, cooks, coordinate with the faculty and office staffs and most important of all must be able to control the students ranging from the age of 20 to 30.

Any one who is interested in the above job which will commence on Nov/Dec. 2007, can apply by email to **profwin@gamil.com** or **maymay\_yee@yahoo.com** or send in their application to P O Box 19, CMU PO, Chiang Mai 50202, Thailand.

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## **Readers' Front**

Dear readers,

We invite comments and suggestions on improvements to Kaowao newsletter. With your help, we hope that Kaowao News will continue to grow to serve better the needs of those seeking social justice in Burma. And we hope that it will become an important forum for discussion and debate and help readers to keep abreast of issues and news. We reserve the right to edit and reject articles without prior notification. You can use a pseudonym but we encourage you to include your full name and address.

Regards,  
 Editor  
 Kaowao News  
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## **A Cat Cannot Hide Long Underwater**

*On the “Canada Joins Cat Fanciers’ Club Lately”*

I want to express my point of view to the Burmese people and the world community as a citizen of Burma regarding the editorial: *Burma Herald Newspaper* posted by Kaowao through the Monnet Group on the topic “*Canada Joins Cat Fanciers’ Club Lately*”. We are not bathing the cat. Instead the cat is diving into the water to escape the dangers. We all know well that cats do not like water, but we also know that the cat cannot hide for long under water.

I assume Ko Myint Shwe or his team members wrote the editorial in the *Burma Herald*. But they are all under the influence of Ko Kyint Shwe and the Burmese generals. I do not want to target Ko Myint Shwe as leaning on the side of the junta's favorites, as the Burman in exile media do, nor do I support his current views because I see it is as a mockery to the Canadian and US governments.

But I am also disappointed with the delay of the world democratic governments and the United Nations over their powerlessness to deal concretely with Burma. Our people have asked the world community for help time and again, but we continue to suffer, while Asian countries in the region turn a blind eye. I still believe there is time for individuals, communities and governments to support democracy and call for the release of all political prisoners. A legitimate constitution is yet to come. Crucially in another way, we must not forget that we the people of Burma have the greater responsibility to act. It is better to rely on our pens and our feet than to kneel for help.

We must remember that the peoples’ uprising in 1988 was to topple the single-party system of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and to form a democratic government based on a multi-party system.

The Burmese military promised to hand over state power to the people and return to the barracks after the 1991 election, but instead did an about face. They threaten, oppress, and intimidate the unarmed democracy activists and ethnic leaders through their state controlled media. There is no mercy from the junta leaders towards the people despite various kinds of appeals such as – social, judicial and political reforms as promised. Our country suffers from the resource curse in which countries rich in resources wind up underdeveloped due to corruption. All money flowing into the country goes to the military and foreigners; none of it is used for true economic development for our people. Any mercy and goodwill toward the people is a sign of weakness for them. However, I am sure that the souls of the military leaders fear the strength of the people.

The fight for equality and rights of the nationalities are like a chronic disease that has festered and spread since we achieved independence from Britain. The nationality leaders who demand rights are accused of trying to break up the union and as a consequence are sentenced to lengthy prison terms. On the other hand, the Burman leaders defend their position and say these leaders will break up the union, but this is just propaganda trick to hold onto state power. Today, almost all of the Burmese don't buy this political rhetoric because the country has suffered more since they retook power in 1991; the people know the cat and mouse games played by the military leaders.

Nowadays, the military leaders are trying to trick the people with the same old voice to gain a 25% seating in the parliament without an election so that the army can prevent disintegration of the union. This is unacceptable for the Burmese people to be again subjected to such reasoning.

Talking about the peoples' movements and media activists, there is a lot to learn from our neighbor, Thailand. According to a Thai media icon and the founder of Manager Newspaper and Asia Satellite TV, Sondhi Limthongkul, "*I am a journalist who is hated by the journalists because I dare to speak out the truth*". His words reflect a truth about journalism that we must speak out against injustice and expose corrupt leaders. He must feel relief that the Thaksin administration was overthrown by the People Alliance for Democracy (PAD) composed of his supporters and partners, but perhaps at a price because the Thai military had to be relied upon to do it and now once again have to demand for a democratic government.

Therefore, we the people of Burma need the cooperation, mutual respect and support of the world community to reach our goals as a free people. I believe that a 50 million strong people who demand democracy will bring down the military leaders. In doing so, the role of the journalists is very important in the mainstream media. A journalist must have the courage to speak the truth with good intentions and serve the interests of the people. A true journalist should not work for any political wing in order to protect his or her self-interests. If you are a journalist who loves to release a litany of propaganda, you are against freedom of expression, the hallmark of journalism.

We will fight and report for as long as we have to achieve a truly democratic country. The cat has to come out amidst dangerous times ahead. Nothing can keep the truth from the people.

Banya Htaw Weang

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**ABOUT US**

Kaowao Newsgroup is committed to social justice, peace, and democracy in Burma. We hope to be able to provide more of an in-depth analysis that will help to promote lasting peace and change within Burma. Editors, reporters, writers, and overseas volunteers are dedicated members of the Mon activist community based in Thailand.

*Our motto is working together for change and lasting peace.*