

KAOWAO NEWS NO. 133

Newsletter for social justice and freedom in Burma

September 14-29, 2007

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Readers' Front

Dear readers,

We invite comments and suggestions on improvements to the 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. Additionally, 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

kaowao@hotmail.com, www.kaowao.org

Dear Editor,

Call for immediate international attention: We must act as a caring community to prevent the killing of thousands

I am writing on behalf of the Burmese people who have been ruled by a brutal military dictatorship for the past 50 years. The Burmese people are in need and the world is watching. Tens of thousands are now marching in Burma for a democratic government. For decades the Burmese people have suffered and dreamed of a better life with many thousands sacrificing their lives to tell the world of their peaceful struggle for freedom. The people in Burma have silently suffered under a repressive regime for over 5 decades and have paid the price for speaking up. The military rules with impunity and refuses to have talks with Aung Sung Suu Kyi who is kept under house arrest.

The military has crushed peaceful movements in the past and they may do so in the days, weeks, or months ahead. So we must act now to let them know we are watching and that they cannot get away with the gunning down of people who are protesting for a better life. In 1988 they shot and killed thousands who protested for democracy and in the past 2 decades have killed, tortured or imprisoned countless others or anyone who expresses dissent to their rule.

Now thanks to the international media and the Internet there is a window of opportunity for the international community to act forthrightly and to pressure the military to find a peaceful means to engage with the democratic opposition in a meaningful way. We must support these many thousands of brave people who are now once again standing up against a brutal dictatorship. These people are fighting for their lives through peaceful means and we must act as an international community to support them. To do this we must contact our local governments, trade unions, social networks, and business partners who work in Asia or anyone who has compassion for innocent people and urge them to contact the United Nations and the governments of India, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, including the western governments and all those others who do business in Burma with the generals and urge them to use their power and diplomatic contacts and pressure the military officials to use peaceful means in responding to the peoples' desire for a responsible government. Most importantly, we must demonstrate to the Burmese government that we are watching their actions as an international community and will hold them accountable if they choose to instead slaughter thousands of innocent women, men, and children who have dreamed of a life without repression for so many decades.

With Metta,

Aleta Cooper

Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

Thank you so much for your wonderful comment upon MNC's letter to NMSP and Cease-fired Groups. I strongly believe that this comment could bring more effective and powerful result. We want NMSP and cease-fired groups to get involve in this Up-rising. They could make a difference outcome of demonstration happened in Burma today if all these groups changed their policy toward SPDC. It is the time for MNSP and other cease-fired groups to reconsider their constructive engagement toward SPDC. It is the time for all these groups to show their stand clearly, Whether on the side of people or the enemy of people. While the whole of the country, all walks of life, without any weapons take part in the Up-rising against the Military Regime , the armed resistance groups are going to sitting down together with SPDC and have a friendly chat is not the way we want to see today. We want to see them to stand together with the people and to fight against the SPDC. The sooner is the better.

Welcome such comment and would like to see such comment very often in Kaowao website.

With best regards

Nai Pe Thein Zar

Canberra, Australia

Students and Monks from Mawlamyine Sent Back Home

Kaowao: September 29, 2007

The news emerged that monks studying at the monasteries and University students who finished their examinations were sent back home from the capital of Mon State.

“The protest leaders were arrested and students and all the monks were sent back to their home yesterday, so no more marching in Mawlamyine,” sources from the New Mon State Party (NMSP) reported.

One University student said that, “On September 27, the government authorities were already arranging the trucks at the front of the student hostels to send them to their home.”

“I don’t live in the hostel, I live in my relative’s house in the Myine Tharyar quarter, but I was sent back. The head of the authorities in the quarter was previously preparing the trucks for the students, so as soon as they finished the examination they came to the hostel and let us collect our belongings to go back. Even though we wanted to go back tomorrow, they didn’t allow us to stay and forced us to go back as soon as possible,” a second year Mawlamyine University student told to Kaowao Reporter.

A Monk from the studying temple reported, “The monks in Mawlamyine were also forced to go back. On September 26 the authorities came and ordered the monks to go back, so on the 27th they came and picked us up with the trucks.”

According to another monk, “On the night of the 26th the authorities came to the monasteries to investigate, remind the monks to stop their protest and order the

monks who were from the village to go back to their home. Then they arrested over 40 monks who were on the list of the leader of the demonstration.”

Protests happened for a moment in Mawlamyine on September 27 but the news emerged that the authorities would use violence to crack down on the demonstration. Therefore at 3 p.m the protesters broke up their group.

According to Khitpyaing News, to crack down on the demonstration, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), Karen ceasefire group and SPDC came down to Mawlamyine on September 25 with 10 trucks along the Myawadee motor road.

Junta continues crackdown on monks overnight

Independent Mon News Agency: September 29, 2007

The Burmese military junta continued to crackdown on monks involved in the protests overnight, while the regime controlled MRTV said stability had been restored in Rangoon (Yangon).

The army raided monasteries in Tharketa last night and residents said many monks were arrested.

"From what I know the troops have been cracking down on monks from one quarter to another each night," a resident in South Okkalapa.

"We have to patrol all night to avoid being arrested. Many monks are fleeing to evade arrest. They dare not sleep inside the temples," a monk in Rangoon said.

Many people sleep in the temple. At least two temples were raided by troops last night.

"They came in to temple and started beating up monks. They don't care whether one is involved in the protest or not. They just beat you," a monk said.

Last night the riot police raided the 108 Monastery in Tharketa. No monks were arrested because they had avoided sleeping in the monastery. But they (troops) searched everything and looted about two million Kyats kept in the temple.

"The protests have weakened because troops have locked the temples preventing monks from going out. Now there are fewer monks involved in the protests," a resident said.

Every temple is under close watch and the troops that raiding the temples do not understand the Burmese language because they are from Kachin State.

In southern Burma and Pegu (Bago) monks were forced to go home and protests stopped.

Burmese prince asks Canada to cut off ties

By Jamie Komarnicki, **Calgary Herald**: Friday, September 28, 2007

A hereditary Burmese prince living in exile near Calgary says western nations should cut off diplomatic ties with the military junta cracking down on democracy protests in Myanmar.

"I would like to see the democratic nations give support to the people of the country. The generals will come out shooting -- they don't care, they are there to stay in power," said Tiger Yawngwe, or Prince Hso Khan Pha, president of the Federated Shan States, an area in eastern Myanmar that declared independence and formed an interim government in 2005.

"Countries like Canada should take the moral lead."

Yawngwe's father was Myanmar's first president, who led a democratic government overthrown by Burmese dictators.

Sao Shwe Thaik died in prison under suspicious circumstances. In 1962, the family was driven from Myanmar, then known as Burma.

Yawngwe keeps a close eye on the situation back home and is hopeful the latest uprising will gain credibility in the eyes of international bodies such as the United Nations.

Violence erupted this week as security forces fired automatic weapons into crowds of Buddhist monks and civilian pro-democracy protesters filling the streets in Myanmar's largest city, Yangon.

The contribution of the country's spiritual leaders is giving added strength to the protests, said Yawnghwe, who lives in Innisfail.

"The monks do not give up easily. The monks are really the intellectual and moral force of the people," he said. "If they kill the monks, the people will get very upset."

Others in Calgary are doing their best to make sure people take notice of the developments in Myanmar.

Cham Toik is the editor of the website www.kaowao.org, which receives updates from sources inside the country.

A university student during the violent uprisings in Myanmar in 1988, Toik fled the country after he was blacklisted for his pro-democracy writing in university publications.

Now, he wants to make sure people are aware of what's happening.

"We came from the same experience. We feel like we want to do something for those people. They have no voice," he said.

"We also want to send a message to the people of Burma that they are not fighting alone; the other refugees in exile are not forgetting about our people."

jkomarnicki@theherald.canwest.com

Mon State: Monks continue marching in the Students' Quarter

Kaowao: September 25, 2007

September the 25th was the second consecutive day of monks protesting in Myine Thayar quarter near the Mawlamyine University of Mon State.

According to one university student, "Over 400 monks walked along the Myine Thayar way and before long over 50 university students joined with them."

"Today the protest numbers were not as high as yesterday because many monks have traveled to other monasteries to garner support for future protests," said one protest leader.

“Yesterday and this morning the authorities visited every monastery and demanded they stop protesting. The warning stated that if the protests continue they will not be responsible for the well-being of protesters,” said a monk from an anonymous monastery. He added, “Even so, university students will take part with monks to perform the demonstration on September 26th.”

One University student reported to Kaowao that, “The demonstration left from Kyite Kha Mei and continued until around 2 PM, when they returned to Kyite Kha Mei and the group disassembled. Although the second day protest didn’t have as many people and monks as the first day, so many people came forward to donate water and food for the monks.”

“Myine Thar Yar authorities ordered the students to go back home after their exams are finished, however many students want to remain and join the protests,” said the University student.

Monk-led demonstration welcomed by New Mon State Party

Kaowao: September 26, 2007

The cease-fire New Mon State Party (NMSP) welcomed Buddhist monk-led demonstration because people have made a right decision according to leaders of the party.

"Protests occurring at the moment with both ordinary citizens and monks are seeking to solve the problem of all people; this protesting is completely in line with people's desires," said Nai Hongsar, Secretary General of the NMSP.

"They are seeking help for these protests wherever they can. We really appreciate that the monks are taking action on behalf of the people, and that they are doing so peacefully and with dignity. If the government doesn't respond what they are doing in the right way, more trouble will inevitably spread throughout the country. The demonstrations are growing bigger and bigger everyday," he reminded government authorities.

"Protestors today requested facts from the government in an effort to solve the conflict among political groups, begin national reconciliation and also to seek out the best solution," said another NMSP leader.

"The NMSP Central Committee is now holding a meeting where we will discuss this current wave of demonstrations," one Central Committee member told to Kaowao.

Nai Ong Mangae, the spokesman of NMSP said, "the NMSP welcomed the protests led by the monk because the monks demand to start a tripartite dialogue and to release all political prisoners in Burma that are totally the same of our demands that we have asked the government since we signed the ceasefire agreement.

Nai Hongsar, in his most recent statement to Kaowao, said that whatever the NMSP spokesperson announces in regards to the demonstrations has the full support of the NMSP.

The NMSP is one of the strongest ethnic ceasefire groups and occasionally speaks out in support of an open dialogue with the military regime. The NMSP is headed by nine CEC (Central Executive Committee) comprised of Nai Htaw Mon, Nai Rotsa, Nai Hongsar and Nai Chan Toi. It reached a cease-fire agreement on the 29th June, 1995 after more than four decades of fighting against the successive military governments.

Monks from Mawlamyine Protest Today

Kaowao: September 24, 2007

Buddhist monks from various monasteries in Mawlamyine protested today, according to sources from the capital of Mon State, southern Burma.

The demonstration leader claimed over 300 monks first met at the Myine Yatanar market (Zay Gyi) today, "...and from there walked into the town and read the Buddhist teachings (Metta Thoat). By 4 o'clock they arrived at Thiri Myaing quarter and whilst walking on to Zay Gyo, the number of monks increased to between 1500 and 2000."

"Three different Monk associations protested today in three places. At 12:30 there was between 300 and 400 members at each demonstration site," the source told to Kaowao.

“As they walked from Kyite Sake (Kyaik Thoat), Mayangone Quarter, they had over 200 members join in. Following this, they walked on to the Kyite Thanlan Pagoda, and from here they continued to the U Zi Na pagoda again,” he added.

An additional 100 monks joined the march from Kyite Thanlan to Zay Gyo Bus Terminal, but broke up at around 3:30 when the group reached Zay Gyo.

One onlooker reported to Kaowao that, this protesting group arranged themselves in rows, while three monks read out the Buddhist teachings. In the front row the religion’s flag was held proudly.

According to the protest leader, Rev. Thumana (not his real name), “Today is the first day of protests, so we didn’t want the people involved.” Even so, when the protest crossed in front of schools many students emerged to encourage those marching. News then emerged that University students will participate with the monks in their protest. On September 26th, University students will finish up their final exam.

“Yesterday different Monks’ Associations met in downtown Kyite Sake and planned for a demonstration to boycott the military regime or ‘PattaNiKookZaNā’ for all the monks in Mawlamyine,” said the Buddhist monk.

Statement on support of Buddhist monks led demonstration in Burma

Mon Canadian Society (September 27, 2007)

With mounting protests in Burma, the ruling military junta has reacted with unwarranted and ferocious assaults on the unarmed demonstrators. Violent confrontations have taken place in several locations in Rangoon, Mandalay and other cities. Several peaceful demonstrators -- mainly Buddhist monks, nuns and students -- have been held.

The unrest started three weeks ago when Buddhist monks and nuns began marching and reciting the “Parita Sutta” (the Buddha’s words of kindness) and requesting the military to respect the will of the people who suffered from hardship under the present military regime.

As the nonviolent protest have gained momentum and spread out through country wide and civilians have started to join with the monks, they have vowed to continue their demonstrations until their demands are fulfilled. However, the Buddhist monks, nuns and civilians have been beaten by riot police who have fired

teargas canisters and live bullets at them. Since a curfew was ordered, the killing will escalate, as the demonstrators will not back down.

With regard to the critical situation in Burma, on behalf of all the common people in Burma, we urge:

- Canadians and international community to show solidarity with the peaceful demonstrators who are selflessly sacrificing for the good cause of human being.
- The military regime to immediately stop the violent crackdown against the peaceful demonstrators who exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.
- The military regime to engage in a dialogue with democratic leaders and ethnic nationalities to achieve national reconciliation.
- The UNSC (United Nations Security Council) to immediately intervene and host a multiple party talks on Burma.
- The international governments to push Burma's neighbours, China, India and ASEAN to pressure the military regime to restore peace and democracy in Burma.

Palm-leaf manuscripts throw new light on ancient kingdom MonTALES

Mon has become the forgotten kingdom and the Mon have for centuries had no place to call home.

By Subhatra Bhumiprabhas, **The Nation**

Published on September 24, 2007

The history of the Mon, however, as one of the most powerful nations of Southeast Asia has been told through the generations.

Many fascinating stories in the Mon's history and legends have been translated and retold in lots of papers - most have appeared in Burmese and Thai royal chronicles and many works on Mon studies in various languages were based on them.

Interestingly, the old Mon inscriptions on palm leaves found and read by today's Mon scholars tell many other stories.

The scholars and their foreign counterparts on Mon studies around the world will meet in Bangkok next month to share new knowledge and discoveries on Mon history, identity, culture, language and performing arts at the international conference on "The Discovery of Ramanaya Desa" - or as it is known in Thai, "Krob-krueng rueng Raman".

The conference is being organised by the Mekong Research Unit at the Institute of Asian Studies, Southeast Asian Studies Centre's Graduate School at Chulalongkorn University.

"Ramanaya Desa", as Mon scholar Nai Sunthorn Sripanngern found from reading and interpreting inscriptions on the old Mon palm leaf manuscripts, was a country or kingdom inhabited by people of different ethnicities.

Nai Sunthorn spent several years studying Mon palm leaf manuscripts in monasteries in Central Thailand. Among the various manuscripts, he found a bundle of 72 pages entitled "Raja-thabuut".

The ending note of the manuscripts stated that Raja-thabuut was first inscribed during the reign of King Siha Raja of Sudhammavati (Sadhun); the second time was during the reign of King Anawratha of Pagan; and the third time was during the reign of King Bayin-nuang of Hangthawaddy, said Nai Sunthorn in his paper "Comparison of Mon chronicles: Raja-thabuut and succeeding chronicles", which is to be discussed at the conference.

As the legends hold, the old city of Hanthawaddy was founded by Mon monarchs in 592 with 17 successive Mon kings before the Mon royal city fell to Burmese kings of Pagan in 800. It was also a Mon monarch who built the world-renowned Shwedagon Pagoda, which has become a symbol of Burma today.

On three major occasions, the Mon lost their kingdom to wars with the Burmese, most devastatingly in 1757 when Burmese King Alongphaya attacked Hanthawaddy. Ten years later, the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya was also destroyed by the Burmese.

"In the past, most foreign scholars learnt about Mon from Burmese chronicles. But the Burmese chronicle on Mon was translated from Mon language and in which we found several inaccuracies," the Mon scholar said.

Studying the history of the Mon by reading Burmese or English publications may lead to confusion and inaccuracy because they are usually translated from Burmese, Nai Sunthorn said.

For example, Mon people called both Thai and Tai ethnic people "Siam Kui", but the Burmese called Thais "Yodia". Many other inaccuracies were found in names and eras of kings and towns, said Nai Sunthorn, who was born in Mudon town, which is about 10 kilometres south of Moulemein.

Sunthorn will share new discoveries from the old Mon manuscripts with foreign scholars such as Patrick McCormick who studies "The Paak Laat Chronicles and the creation of Mon historical narratives".

"This is the first time that scholars from East and West have come together to review Mon history and culture in various perspectives," said Dr Sunait Chutintaranond, director of the Mekong Research Unit.

Southeast Asia is a diverse society but history, identity and culture of the stateless people are often overlooked, Sunait said.

"Mon is in many things we see as Thai-ness and Burmese today. Both Thailand and Burma integrated cultural diversities into what they call Thai and Burmese culture," he said.

Sunait is among the few Thai historians who are experts on Burmese history.

In the royal court of Siam during the early Rattanakosin Era, many Mon ladies became mothers of princes and royal descendants of the Chakri Dynasty. Many Thai chronicles saw these Mon court ladies playing politics in order to support their male relatives in the Siamese court.

One such example was found in a foreign account written by Anna Leonowens, who served in the Siamese Court during the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV).

In her famous and controversial book "The English Governess and the Siamese Court", Leonowens tells the story of one of King Mongkut's consorts who was put in jail because she had tried to suggest the King appoint her elder brother to a noble post.

"She had been led to petition, through her son, that an appointment held by her late uncle, Phya Khien, might be bestowed on her elder brother, not knowing that another noble had already been preferred to the post by his Majesty," wrote Leonowens, who called the lady "Hidden-Perfume".

A Thai-born Mon scholar, Ong Bunjoon, said the lady was Chao Chom Marnda Sonklin, who was from a Mon family. She wanted her brother to be appointed governor of Phra-pradaeng.

Ong, however, found in his work for his master's thesis on "Mon Women in the Royal Court of Siam during the Ratanakosin Period 1782-1932" that the Mon ladies made great contributions in the royal court, especially in arts and cultural aspects, which have become cultural components in Thai society.

"It can be said that the religion, arts and culture of the Mon have stretched from the court to the commoners because of the fact that many members of the governing class from past to present are Mon descendants," said Ong, who has been working through Mon and Thai chronicles as well as foreign accounts on Mon studies for his research.

Ong will share his knowledge with about 50 scholars from Thailand, Burma and the West at the conference from October 11 to 13.

About 50 academic papers on Mon studies will be discussed, including "History of Mon culture and language assimilation and variation" by Nai Maung Toe, "A short history of Mon - migration, Indian civilisation and Kingdoms in Dvaravati and Ramanyadesa" by Nai Pan Hla.

The Mon way of life in ancient times will be featured in exhibitions and Mon performing arts including "Pee-Paat Mon" (Mon musical ensemble) from Hanthawaddy are scheduled for October 12-13 at Chulalongkorn University's main auditorium. Thailand's Department of Fine Arts will recall Mon history by performing the classical epic "Rajadhiraj" which features the stories of Mon, Burmese and Siamese monarchs of old.

Further information about the conference and the cultural events can be obtained from the Institute of Asian Studies on 02 2187468 and CU Books Centre on 02 2187021, 02 2554441.

A ticket to ride

Triple traveling allowance of train in Mon State

Kaowao: September 20, 2007

In Mon State, train travelers on the Moulmein-Ye line have seen their travel costs triple the prices originally quoted by the SPDC in local media.

According to the SPDC's newspapers, ticket prices for the new Moulmein-Ye train range between just three and four hundred Kyats (Burmese currency) per passenger. However a traveler from Ye township has reported passengers having to spend 1400 Kyats per ticket. He said, "From Ye to Moulmein, they wrote a first-class ticket out for only 460 Kyats, but the passenger was made to pay 1400 Kyats."

This new Moulmein-Ye train started running last week on the 9th of September. An ordinary class ticket should cost 380 Kyats and a First class ticket 460 Kyats, according to the prices quoted in the *New Light of Myanmar* (September 10th, 2007).

Since the BSPP government, a recent trend has seen military soldiers and civil servants reserve train tickets, only to sell them at an inflated price to needy commuters, pocketing this extra income.

According to a villager from Hnint Kayin, Lamaing Township, villagers knew they were being exploited by the railway station conductor but could do nothing about it. She said, "The train from our village to Moulmein costs us 1000 Kyats, but they've written the price of a first class ticket as 380 Kyats on a sign at the ticket booth. But we all know this situation, and can do nothing. We can't take any sort of action, and the only way for us to travel to Moulmein is by train. Even then, when we arrive at Moulmein we have to spend between 500-600 Kyats to get inside the town." Hnint Kayin villagers rely heavily on trains to Moulmein, as traveling by car is difficult in the rainy season.

Mehn Tala, a Moulmein student from Taung Bon village, told Kaowao that transportation costs to town when arriving by train after dark are approximately 1000 Kyats, due to poorly lit roads and the position of the new station; a mountain stands between it and the town centre.

Although the travel costs of hilux cars increased only slightly after the SPDC raised fuel prices in mid-August this year, less civilians chose to travel by car over

the last month, according to one hilux car owner who was transporting people between Moulmein and Ye.

After fuel prices increased, there wasn't anything left for the car owners to do. A car owner of Ramanya Transportation added, "We never used to be afraid to drive that road because we'd have a car full of commodities. Now, although we can pick up subway travelers, there over 25 toll-gates so we have to pay about 20,000 Kyats between Moulmein and Ye."

The traveling cost between Moulmein and Ye by car in August was 3000 Kyats but has now risen to 3500 Kyats due largely to rising fuel prices. It will cost a traveler 3000 Kyats between Moulmein and Lamaing, 1500 Kyats between Thanpyuzayat and Moulmein and 800 Kyats between Mudon and Moulmein.

Villagers in Ye and Lamaing townships began running their own highway cars to Moulmein in 2005, with cars running between Kaw Dut, Taung Pyin, Taung Bon village in Lamaing township and Han Gan, A Sin, Duya village in Ye township.

Passengers normally take motor vehicles, which are much faster and more reliable. Government-run trains have frequent delays, broken seats and run on poorly-maintained rail. Even so, many civilians have returned to train travel to avoid using motor vehicles, which cost about 3500 Kyats for per trip; previously it was about 3000 Kyats to travel by car.

Since the Moulmein station is not in the city, passengers have to pay an extra 500 to 600 Kyats for a ride to the city. Some people pay 1000 Kyats to ride by motorbike. Since the fuel price has gone up, other commodity prices are also going up.

There are now four trains using Moulmein-Ye railway station, including Rangoon-Tavoy trains. The Moulmein Ye Railroad stretches 90 miles, connecting the capital city of Mon State to the southernmost township of Ye. It was first built by the British when Burma was a British colony.

Mon National Council: “Ceasefire groups - It's time to stand with the people”

Kaowao: September 14, 2007

Australian-based Mon National Council (MNC) has urged the New Mon State Party and other ceasefire groups to reconsider their policy.

Active but unarmed groups, including monks from Burma, have been acting against the SPDC in a movement that is gradually spreading throughout the country. In response, the MNC has urged ceasefire groups to reconsider their policy, stating: “... it is time to stand with the people.”

“It is time to reconsider their ceasefire policy and strategy issues with the SPDC. It is also time to make a clear decision on where they stand. They should combine with non-armed groups rising up against the SPDC,” the MNC expressed an appeal for ceasefire armed groups in a statement on September 10.

“The SPDC have tried to use ceasefire groups as a stepping stone for expanding their military activities. These groups have been used as a cover and to escape worldwide pressure,” said the statement.

Within the MNC demands was a list of seven facts regarding the current situation in Burma, including the ongoing protests against fuel price hikes which are viewed by some as a second major attempt to achieve an independent Burma.

Protest marches against massive increases in fuel prices have been ongoing since the middle of August 2007 in Rangoon, and have now spread to other parts of Burma despite a brutal crackdown by junta gangs. Over 130 protesters including the student leaders from the '88 Generation', active members of National League for Democracy (NLD) and monks have been detained and sentenced by the junta.

Major Nyan Tun, liaison officer of the NMSP told a Kaowao reporter the issue was too big to comment on straight away. The NMSP will instead appeal to their Central Committee to discuss and decide on an appropriate response at their next meeting.

Commentary

Men of Conscience Should Boycott the Beijing Olympic

Kanbawza Win

The original purpose of the Olympic Games, both ancient and modern, is to foster the ideal of, “*A sound mind in a sound body,*” and to promote friendship among the nations. The Official Olympic Anthem runs “*Immortal spirit of Antiquity, Father of the Beautiful and Good.*” How can these ideals be applied to Beijing, when it is the very heart of all the evil and President Hu Jintao ranks as the most ruthless human rights violator of the world? People have to consider the consequences of the government already a totalitarian and dictatorial against its own people and other nations particularly Burma and Sudan.

The Beijing Games serve as a conclusive proof that sports and politics are connected and is purely an image booster in the international arena and legitimacy at home. Lamentably sports has become politics nowadays as it bring image to the country and that major international companies and business enterprises and all top athletes no matter of what country they came from are professionals, to show their prowess in the world. Since Socialist states especially China consider, a sport victory as an affair of state importance, these athletes are trained and treated as state assets. It became increasingly difficult for athletes of other smaller countries like Burma, ASEAN, Africa and Latin American countries, who do not have the resources to train professionally to compete or to realise the political implications and values to compete successfully against China and other big countries.

The Beijing Olympic organizers are evicting tenants to make room for castors, shutting down factories to reduce pollution, plotting to control the weather, staging rallies to teach English and ordering Beijing’s brusque citizens to mind their manners. What ever it takes, the organizers are determined to put on the grandest Games and make them a symbol of the Communist nation’s arrival as a global power to be reckoned with. A series of recent scandals involving contaminated food and consumer goods in China has only heightened the urgency for Beijing, to put on a good face for the more than 10,000 athletes and over half a million visitors expected. China will dole out a record of \$40 billion on stadium and airport and subway improvement more than twice of what Greece spend on the last Athens Olympic. It wants to show off its model of efficiency as sports venues and athlete houses were completed well ahead of the schedule time.

However, the other side is that well documented humanitarian groups has proven that the Chinese government has evicted more than one and a half a million (according to the Geneva based Centre Housing Rights and Evictions) people to clear the way for venues and other Olympic facilities. At least in this aspect it has copied from the Burmese military Junta of forced relocation and eviction meted out to the Burmese people. Just like the Burmese army had done, many of Beijing's displaced tenants have been given little or no notice and forced evictions have been violent with fatalities. The evicted residents are given little or no compensation at all and many of them have become homeless. In fact the Chinese clearance of residence is unprecedented double the number relocated by the Seoul Olympics of 1988 except that it could not beat the Burmese Junta in this aspect.

Pollution is a chronic problem in Beijing, there is usually a yellowish mix of factory emissions, car exhaust and Gobi Desert sand and for this Beijing will spend \$ 3 billion on pollution control alone. It will order one million cars off gridlock streets to cut traffic and auto emissions, last year alone Beijing removed 15,000 old taxis and 3,000 buses much to the hardship of its citizens. It has closed several factories and leading factories as Capital Iron and Steel Works are scheduled to reduce production before moving to an island in Bohai Bay. At a time when International Energy Agency says that China is surpassing USA as the world's top producer of greenhouse gas, the Chinese are also tooting their efforts to create an environmentally friendly green Olympic. What more the Olympic officials are planning to control the rain to keep outdoor events dry. They will blast clouds with rockets carrying chemicals designed to make it rain quickly, so the storm will be over before the events begin. Besides zapping the clouds, the Chinese will roll out their technology to impress the world. Athletes won't carry keys in the Olympic village, their room doors will open when they show up their faces. Camera on the doors will be linked to the digital recognition scanners.

What can the world do in face of such a formidable giant, will humanitarian have a say in Beijing Olympics? Obviously the Chinese will not tolerate dissent. When the Olympic torch relay route was announced, Tibetan activists oppose Beijing's plan to take the torch to Mount Everest and Taiwan wants the torch to pass through it, were of no avail. Wang Wei, the Secretary General of the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee said that "we have laws that if you want to protest you will have to apply", which they will not approve. They will arrest anybody that dares to protest and shipped them thousands of miles away.

The London based Amnesty International says that China has failed to improve human rights, a promise which the government makes before it was awarded the Olympics. Persecution of civil rights groups and the censoring of domestic media are still going on in might and main. What more the Chinese government misuses its "re-education through labor" system to detain activists. This system has been in

place since 1957 and can keep an activist for four years without trial. No doubt the Beijing Olympic will be on the model of the Moscow Olympic of 1980 where the late President Ronald Regan was bold enough to boycott but in Beijing one of the smiling faces will be President George W Bush, a barometer of how American morality has changed.

Burma is the first nation outside the Communist bloc to recognize the People's Republic of China in 1949; the first to conclude a Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-Aggression in 1961; the first to achieve a boundary settlement with China in 1961; and one of the first to patch up relations with Beijing after the Cultural Revolution. But also ironically is the first dictator to congratulate Beijing's crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square when Beijing made a carbon copy of the Burmese army shooting into the crowds on the 8th day of the 8th month (August) of the year 1988 better known as 8888. Now to mock the Burmese democracy movement, the Beijing Olympic is schedule at 8 pm on the 8th month of the year 2008 as 8 is the lucky number for the Chinese in as much as 9 is the lucky number of Ne Win and his cohorts. Every patriotic Burmese should join the boycott of the Beijing Olympic and we should support of what Ko Aung Din of US Campaign for Burma, to demonstrate in front of every Chinese embassy of the world to show our disapproval. Every Burmese Diaspora people should joined the conscious people of the international community to protest this genocidal Olympic.

China had sold jet fighters, frigates and other heavy military equipment for the Burmese military Junta to crack down on the ethno democratic force and together with Russia is also the first nation to veto the Burmese problem from discussing at the UN Security Council effectively stuffing out the ethno democratic aspirations of the Burmese people. Very lately the Burmese Foreign Minister *Nyan Win* made an unpublicized, if not a secret; visit to meet Chinese State Councilor *Tang Jiaxuan* in Zhongnanhai, the headquarters of the Chinese government to confirm the Chinese veto in case Burma was put up at the UN Security Council by the West particularly from European Union. Earlier in June, China hosted a secret meeting between senior US State Department officials and Burmese ministers in Beijing with the aim of diffusing the vocal critic of Washington over Burma, even though the Burmese Premier was already brief by *Wen Jiabao* of the Chinese support in the 9th ASEAN plus China, in Kuala Lumpur. The bottom line is that, aside from packages of aid and business deals, Burmese leaders can't bark or bite without China's political and moral support resulting in the organized thugs roaming at will with ferocity as the year advanced.

China's long-touted policy of not interfering in the "internal affairs" of other states is running contradictory to a broader definition of national interests and a greater willingness to embrace global institutions and international norms -- and to use them to advance its foreign-policy goals as a way of shoring up the Olympic game in Beijing. It seems hypocritical to witness a small Chinese army contingent as part of the UN and African force to stop the violence in Darfur region, when it has all the time supporting the Khartoum based Sudanese government with oil purchases and weapon sales, another bigger Burma scenario. If China wants to play a magnanimous big power role in Southeast Asia, she should support the genocide regime of Burma. Any way there is a Burmese saying of ``*Khwe Mee Kaug Che Dauk Sout*`` meaning one cannot make the tail of the dog to be straight by just putting it into a bamboo pipe as the Burmese call them they will be just *Tayoke* meaning Mr Mean. The classic example being their critical role in North Korea's ambition of the atomic bomb and even now is opposing the coercive action of Iran. Burma is just a small fry, the true color of the Chinese will appear once the Beijing Olympic is over.

An international outcry over Beijing's hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games has grown steadily louder. How can the premier event in international sports be hosted by a nation complicit in the most heinous international crimes? The Chinese regime is guilty of perpetrating the ongoing destruction of Tibet, supporting the vicious Burmese Junta, engaging in gross domestic human rights abuses, and, perhaps worst of all, facilitating genocide in Darfur and Burma? Beijing's currently enabling attitudes is a real threat that "their" Olympics will be redefined, made the occasion of an unprecedented shaming campaign. Much more potent than a simple boycott--which does more to punish athletes and the entire international sports community--such a campaign, broadly supported, will create precisely the powerful forum for outrage that Beijing works so hard to suppress domestically. But, if the world pretends that the 2008 Games occur in a moral and political vacuum and yet if Darfur and Burma's agony continues, these Games will inevitably be remembered as the "*Genocide Olympic*".

Burma has a long recorded history of fighting the Chinese for 2,000 years and if our fore fathers could successfully fought why we can't? We have always known that Chinese's Imperialism, is using the policy of a great nation to lord it over its peripherals and would not allow a country at its back door to become democracy. Even at the height of the 8888 demonstrations when the US warships including aircraft carrier Coral Sea appeared in the Burmese waters and rumors were rife that the US would come and help the people of Burma against the hated *Tatamadaw*, China was massing up its army at the border region to take Shan State with the then Communist Party of Burma as a front man (read the theory of Maung Aung Myo) thus proving the Burmese oracle of *Ta Yoke Ka Phi, Shan Ka Ei, She The Bama A Nauk Hmar* meaning the Chinese will press on to lord over

the Shan while the Burmese will let it happens staying in the side lines at the back. The Chinese had taken *Sip Hsong Panna* from Shan State and now they want all of Shan state especially east of the Salween River.

Even now the unofficial count of the Chinese in Burma comes to five million who are highly prosperous, while the country of fifty five million plus are desperately poor and with the monks and the 8888 generation movement heightening the tensions every day, there is every possibility that the law takes into its own hands and obviously the first attack will be on the hated local Chinese. But the men from the Dragon throne are willing to pay the price, for this will give China a good pretext to invade Burma.

Now that Burma's problem has gone up to the UNSC where Gambari has informed that the developments in Burma have serious concerns in the international community and once again underscore the urgency to step up the international efforts, while the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Zalmay Khalilzad referred to Burma as a threat to regional peace and security. This means that the Security Council will have to decide at which point the situation warrants a response. Even though most members are expected to have a low-key briefing US and EU particularly UK might push for some sort of Council action. The paradoxical Chinese position is that still adheres to the old position of Burma is not a threat to international peace and security and probability will use another veto. However the sly Chinese try to appear to be opened to assisting any country that is trying to normalize relations with Burma, as it has brokered talks with the US at the end of June. Countries like Indonesia, South Africa, Congo and Qatar, which abstained when the draft resolution was put to a vote in January, are still at the cross road to have to decide in agreeing to formal Council action on this issue. The bottom line is that China cannot allow democracy to flourish in its backdoor. It must be like him to run the country with an iron hand. Hence every Burmese must do its best to protest the Chinese and shame them in the international eyes, proving beyond doubt that this big bully is not worthy of leading the international community. One can start with the boycott of the Beijing Olympic game.

Paris

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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.