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October 22- November 13, 2007

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Mon refugees at Umpium Camp seek help for survival

Kaowao: November 13, 2007

While many Mon refugees have been recognized by the UNHCR at Umpium Camp near Maesot, they continue to face the harsh realities of living away from their homeland and struggle everyday in front of residents who have little sympathy for them.

Mehm Hongsar, a former member of Nai Hloin's armed group says over 150 Mon refugees are not familiar with the customs and life of local villagers and have no opportunities provided to them so they can earn themselves enough income to buy food for their families. The refugees have asked some overseas Mon organizations for help, such as the Mon Women Organization of the USA who have provided some assistance, he explained.

In August 2007, Thai authorities forced the Mon refugees who came from Bangkok and other western border areas to leave the camp. After negotiation with the UNHCR and Thai officials, they were allowed to stay.

The refugees are Mon villagers who have fled persecution by the Burma Army and former guerrillas that split from the New Mon State Party in 2001. The Mon guerrilla leader Nai Hloin sought refugee status in Thailand after he was wounded in a skirmish with the Burmese army. Some of his followers and members of Honsawatoi Restoration Party (HRP) led by Colonel Pan Nyunt remain in remote areas fighting against the BA.

Nai Kyin Hope, a Kawdut villager of Ye Township, said most of them hail from southern Mon State and do not want to resettle in the Mon refugee camps near the New Mon State Party (NMSP) area.

Human rights violations continue even though the New Mon State Party reached a cease-fire deal with the military junta. Several villagers have been arrested, tortured and forced into labour projects for the building of barracks and road construction for the military. Those who can escape do so to the Thai border area and on to Malaysia seeking safe haven and employment to support themselves and their families back home.

Publication follows Mon History Conference

Kaowao: November 12, 2007

The Mon Unity League (MUL) is planning to publish two booklets after a successful Mon history and cultural conference that was held in Bangkok last month.

According to Nai Sunthorn, Chairman of the MUL, "Discovery of Ramanya Monland" is to be distributed during the Mon gathering at the MAU Conference. The publication will be in English that details the founding of Ramanya Monland, the history of Mon and Theravada Buddhism, covering politics, medicine, literature, culture and performing arts.

The other book "In Commemoration of Prof. Dr. Su-ed Gajaseni" describes the life of former Thai Raman Association President who passed away earlier this year. It will include condolence messages from various Mon organizations, an historical account of Banya Cein's family in Thailand and their relatives in Burma, such as Mon Pho Cho (The father of Mon politician) and Dr. Shaw Lu (father of modern medicine in Burma).

The great grand father of Dr. Su-ed Gajaseni, Commander Banyae Join (Banya Cein) fought against the Burman's occupation after Monland was occupied by Alaung Phaya in 1757. Banya Cein led a revolution to regain Mon land in 1775 before he left for Thailand which resulted to the last ruling Mon king Banya Dala and all his royal family members to be beheaded by the Burmese King Sin Byu Shin (Alaung Phayar's eldest son) in 1777.

The Commemoration of Prof. Dr. Su-ed Gajasenī booklet will be distributed at the cremation ceremony of Dr Su-ed in February 2008. The text, in Thai and English, will attract Thai and Thai Mon people alike.

The MUL leader, Nai Sunthorn said the Mon History Conference was a huge success even though there was low media coverage on the event. He expressed his satisfaction and appreciation to see young Thai Mon scholars such as Ong Bunjoon and Sukanya Baoneod who teamed up with other scholars from Mon State, Dr. Nai Pan Hla, Nai Maung Toe and other experts on Mon history and culture such as Mr. Ashley South, Mathias Jenny, and the esteemed Dr. Emmanuel Guillon who teaches Mon history and culture at the Paris University (National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilization).

The four day conference featured several presentations on Mon Buddhist Art and Architecture, Linguistics, Language and Literature, Migration and Settlement in Mon History, cross regional warfare: conflict and confrontation in early Mon history, pre-modern state and cities in lower Burma and the cultures of Mon living in Thailand. The Mon conference was organized by Chulalongkorn University's Institute of Asian Studies and the Southeast Asian Studies Program, in cooperation with Euro-Burma Office and The James H.W. Thompson Foundation.

Canada: Calgarians active for a Free Burma

Kaowao: November 7, 2007

Calgary – The largest ecotourist's haven in western Canada will be the setting for a Free Burma campaign this week to highlight the ongoing human rights abuses perpetuated by the Burmese military junta who ignore their citizens' plight and demands for governmental reform.

Hosted by the Development Studies Club of the University of Calgary, the Free Burma event is being held from November 6th to 9th, 2007 at the university campus.

Mike Nyberg, the event organizer, says the four day event includes several programs such as primary fundraising, information, and movies, cultural performances from Burma's ethnic community and an awareness campaign on landmines. Activities include handing out brochures on the nation wide situation and the gathering of signatures for a petition to be directed at governments and businesses. A photographic display on the devastating impact of landmines on Burma's peoples' and animals, such as elephants, will be shown and how to spur governments worldwide to act more aggressively in banning their use outright (Monday to Friday).

The organizers have dubbed the fund raiser, "Loonies for Burma" so named after Canada's one dollar coin, the Loonie, which has hit a second all time high at \$1.07 against the US dollar last Friday, to financially support human rights and democratic programs for Burma's people. The informal discussion is facilitated by members of the Burmese community as

well as university professors.

The activists' goal is to educate students and the Canadian public about Burma's history as well as provide information on recent developments. In addition to raising financial support for organizations which are actively engaged, the group hopes to pressure governments and business that are involved in Burma and to establish long term connections with local and global organizations on human rights issues.

The event is hosted by the Social Action Board and Canadian Landmines Awareness. The University's Development Studies Club (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/dsc>) is a part of the Social Action Board.

With a population of over a million, Calgary is the largest city in the province of Alberta, Canada. Despite the importance of the oil industry to its economic success, Calgary was ranked the World's Cleanest City by Mercer Quality of Living in a survey published in 2007 by Forbes Magazine.

Over 1000 SPDC landmines on Karen State Highway

Kaowao: November 5, 2007

Karen State: along the Kawkareik and Thingan Nyi Naung highways the SPDC have re-planted over 1000 landmines in an effort to 'clean up' the highway. Sources from the Karen National Union (KNU) stated the SPDC started planting the mines two days ago.

According to Officer General Hla Ngwe, "Three Burmese military groups have come together to replace further landmines in the north Kawkareik area, along with Khi Mu Hta and Noe Poe villages.

"On the 24th and 25th the KNU fought the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)-assisted SPDC. Soon after their fighting, it became clear that the SPDC planned to plant over 1000 landmines in the area between the 29th and 31st of October. These plans were communicated directly from the SPDC army groups Kha Ma Ya 545, 355 and 356," added General Hla Ngwe. "The SPDC didn't design the mines carefully and they planted them in protest to the way we came and fought them, so they didn't cover the mines; sometimes now we hear the mines blast from the jungle but it is difficult to discern who has set them off."

According to a Kawkareik villager, "Whenever we hear bombs blasting in the jungle nobody dares to go and look at the situation, so it's hard to say whether it's villagers or wild animals stepping on the mines."

On October the 25th and 27th the DKBA, assisting the Burmese Army Kha Ma Ya (545), fought the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and KNU in the areas now heavily laden with landmines.

Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) said, "In Karenni State in early October the Burmese Army increased landmines because they thought that the revolutionary groups were coming to attack them."

In Three Pagodas Pass, a land mine exploded at a DKBA head-person's home on October 27th. One person was injured.

One injured; land mine blast near DKBA house

Kaowao: October 29, 2007

Three Pagodas Pass-- In Three Pagodas Pass, a land mine exploded and one person was injured.

A mine exploded near the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army's (DKBA) second-Lieutenant Tin Win's house in Jain Dae quarter, Three Pagodas Pass, Thai Burma border town.

According to a local villager, "Twenty-one year old Ko Tint Phyto stepped on the bomb, causing it to explode. Nobody was wounded except Ko Phyto; his right leg was badly injured and he is currently undergoing treatment in a Thai hospital."

"The bomb exploded at around 8 a.m. on October 27th but Three Pagodas Pass head authorities blocked all information. Until now nobody has been able to take action against those who planted the bomb", an anonymous source from the border town said.

Migrant Watch

Many Mon arrested in shrimp raids

Kaowao: October 31, 2007

Samut Sakhon, Thailand -- Early Wednesday morning Thai police raided the Samut Sakhon shrimp market where many Myanmar migrants work. It is believed they arrested more than 1,000 people, most of whom were Mon ethnics from Myanmar.

Thai authorities detained all workers including those who held employment licenses to work in the province.

"Most bosses here don't confirm our status as workers or aid us to get permits, because they are anxious we will change jobs once we are allowed to work with more freedom," said a worker who escaped from the morning raid.

He added that when the Thai police began their raid they did so with a task-force easily 700 strong and that everyone present was detained, including many children. In addition to the shrimp market, this same task force also raided nearby communities, a seafood processing company, a frozen seafood company, and a low-income workers encampment. All raids occurred on the same morning and within a five kilometre radius of the market.

The police came with seven trucks and began their raids at 4 a.m. A Mon shop owner in Samut Sakhon province said Thai police were still searching and arresting migrant workers until well into the afternoon, with three trucks still present.

"They (Thai authorities) didn't check anyone's employment documents; they just nabbed all the workers, forced them into the waiting trucks and drove them straight to the police station."

Police Major-General Suchart Muenkaew, who led the team, told the Thai media this afternoon that the search started from a report in a local newspaper about the influx of alien workers in Samut Sakhon.

NMSP area knife attack on mother and daughter

Kaowao: October 31, 2007

Three Pagodas Pass -- Yesterday in a border town under New Mon State Party (NMSP) control, a young man attacked a mother and daughter. Both women were seriously injured.

On October 29th at 10 a.m. the unknown man brutally slashed the victims with a large knife as they rested from their work gathering vegetables. The attack took place between the villages of Three Pagodas Pass and the Japanese Well.

The victims in the attack both reside in the Japanese Well village; 50 year-old Mi Tin Hla was transported to the Kanchanaburi General Hospital in Thailand while her daughter, 15 year-old Mi Nu Win was being treated at the NMSP hospital within the Japanese Well village.

"Mi Tin Hla's right hand was wounded seriously and a physician from the Thai-border hospital Chang Loak recommended she be transported immediately to the hospital in Kanchanaburi. She also received injuries around her neck, back and waist," said a Japanese Well villager, Ye Thwin.

The alleged attacker, who is believed to be about 17-18 years old, spoke Thai and Mon and wore Army clothes and dog-tags. The younger victim, Mi Nu Win, released a statement

saying the man had been in the victims' general store in the days prior to the attack. According to Mi Nu Win, when she and her mother rested beside the road he approached them demanding they give him their knives. When they obliged he began to strike out and slash them.

"He asked for the knife in Thai language first and when Mum didn't understand him he asked in Mon if he could borrow the knife. As soon as she gave it to him he tried to kill me first but Mum came to protect me, and yelled for me to run away," said Mi Nu Win.

A captain from the NMSP told Kaowao they are still investigating the case and cannot as yet determine the nationality of the man, or the motive for the attack.

Authorities investigate Moulmein monasteries

Kaowao: October 30, 2007

Moulmein -- Authorities in Moulmein, Mon State last night started investigations into monks and dissidents involved in last month's protests, based on photographs they received.

With the help of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), police were investigating houses within the township they viewed as suspicious; these houses were allegedly involved in the processes of photographing or filming the demonstrations.

"They (*the authorities*) took some photos and asked about the position other photos may have been taken along the street during the demonstrations," said a shop owner from Moulmein.

He added that he saw many photographers during the demonstrations and it was therefore, "...difficult to discern who was a photographer and who was working for the authorities."

Last night, on October 29th, the military and police invaded Monasteries and searched monks they believed could be identified through photographs.

"Last night at around midnight they entered our monasteries and used photos to try and find the Monks who led the demonstrations last month. But they did not arrest anyone," said a monk from a Moulmein monastery on the hill-side of the Mon capital town.

Monks did not want any photos taken while they held the demonstrations, and in some cases they broke cameras if they saw people taking their photos; they believed most photographers were working for the authorities.

Today town authorities continued to investigate various positions where video clips and photographs may have been taken, and were questioning potential dissidents within shops and houses along the main streets.

Junta demand rally Support in Towns of Mon State

Kaowao: October 22, 2007

Mon State: Today Junta forced rally support in Mudon Township by arranging the attendance of rural participants.

The people in Mudon Town were invited by the Junta to attend the rally; however most of them were not going to participate. According to one villager, "We were not attending the rally because there was no threat of fine for not attending, and we did not wish to go. There was no penalty for not attending."

Most of the Mudon population was not planning on attending, however residents from rural areas were forced to agree to attend, and according to villagers near Mudon Township if they failed to agree they would receive serious reprimands.

Each village has had to provide approximately 250 people to the rally. Currently the authorities are collecting the people to join in and support the rally; if a villager fails to attend they will attract a 1,000 kyat fine for vehicle and meal costs.

A villager informed Kaowao that, "On October 24th, the government authorities have planned a rally in Ye Town, southern Mon State so today the TPDC are confirming numbers of so-called supporters in the village and in town."

"The local authorities ordered at least 300 people to attend but they failed to arrange accommodation. If people are required at the rally tomorrow they need to leave their village today, however most villagers still don't know where they will eat and sleep when they arrive. Even so, the authorities are still preparing for the rally, which will begin tomorrow morning," a La Min villager said.

Ye authorities estimate 2, 0000 residents in La Mine village will attend the rally.

Hello! Mr. Ibrahim Gambari and the International Community

Kanbawza Win

The news that the Burmese Junta has called the most senior United Nations Coordinator, Charles PETRIÉ, to Naypyidaw and reprimand him mercilessly, just for saying the truth about the dire state of the Burmese economy that led to the mass protest on the eve of Ibrahim Gambari visit, indicates that they have no will to cooperate with the UN body. Even though this is not unexpected, because the Burmese military's mindset is to "Lying the very concept of truth," it takes one more proof to the situation that they are dumb on dialogue and negotiations and that force is the only option.

A US National Security Council spokesman said: "This outrageous action the day before the arrival of U.N. Special Envoy Gambari in Burma is an insult to the United Nations and the international community." UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who met Gambari in Istanbul, Turkey before the latter goes to Burma expressed his "disappointment" at the Junta's message and expressed "full confidence in the United Nations country team and its leadership." For the moment, the UN has become a paper tiger and of course the three geographically huge countries of China, India and Russia who have indirectly but slyly encourage their little naughty baby the Burmese Junta to do so, will be laughing in their sleeves.

The world knows that it was largely due to China's influence that UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari was able to travel to Rangoon to continue the push for democratic reforms. But putting a full stop there will not solve the problem. At last the world is realizing of how cruel, cunning and treacherous, the Burmese regime is. The statement said that the government of the Union of Burma does not want Petrie to continue to serve in Burma, especially at this time when the cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations is crucial and accused Monsieur Petrie of acting beyond his capacity. It said it is negative and harmed their image, without realizing that the Burmese Military government has no image at all whatsoever for the last two decades.

Singapore, the current Chairperson of Association of South East Asian Nations said that it was deeply disappointed a diversionary tactic, knowing full well through its Constructive Engagement Policy that the Burmese regime will do anything to avoid being pressured into talks about genuine reform. Here lies the danger is that Gambari will spend his 6 days time, talking about the UN's role in Burma instead of the need to end the crackdown and bring real reform. Will Gambari fall to cheap ploys or stood his ground is still to be seen?

Another irony is that China has indeed pledge to assist Gambari and now with the expulsion of Charles PETRIÉ it did not utter any word. Is it a forgone conclusion that also this time Gambari has miserably failed in his mission? The world and the international community are waiting anxiously of what will be the result. Rene Slam of France has also clearly indicated that China key to reform in Burma which has to be followed by Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights.

France's UN Ambassador, Jean-Maurice Ripert, called Burma's action regarding Petrie, as "unacceptable." And seems to paint the picture that the French Administration is taking a lead to coax the men at the Dragon Throne to do something, but an intelligent Burmese knew that under the pretext of Burmese issue Bernard Kouchner's held talks with Chinese leaders is just to pave the way for President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Beijing.

It is understood that Paris has hardened its line on the Iranian nuclear issue since Sarkozy came to power in May and has voiced support for both UN and European sanctions against Tehran but not on Burma. Why? Is it because of TOTAL? Even though we know that China was pivotal in strengthening UN efforts to bring about reform in Burma, it was a major supplier of weapons to the country and has been criticized for not taking tougher action when Junta crackdown on September's mass protests that left hundreds of monks and people dead. But what is Kouchner's part? Is His trip would set the tone for Sarkozy's

dealings with Beijing amid expectations that France may veer from the cozy relationship maintained by his predecessor, Jacques Chirac and nothing on Burma because France want to keep TOTAL in Burma? Another Burma's biggest western investors, Chevron have also rejected calls to divest their stakes in the Yadana gas field..., saying a sellout would only transfer their assets to other, less-scrupulous investors – and could give the regime a windfall in capital gains tax revenues.

The world's thirst for hydrocarbons has thus created a class of well-funded but unsavory governments that have little fear of economic sanctions. If the United States and its allies refuse to buy their oil, someone else will. Unilateral sanctions, like those announced by Bush, might help. But as long as Burma and other governments have petroleum to sell, they will have plenty of hard currency with which to buy new friends.

Sudan's president, Omar Hassan Ahmed Bashir, has used oil sales to China to hold off, and then dilute, diplomatic pressure to stop the slaughter in Darfur. The government of Equatorial Guinea that rivaled Burma in the worst human rights records of the world was welcomed in Washington last year by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as a "good friend" of the United States. Another good friend, the Saudi royal family, rules one of the world's most undemocratic regimes. Libya's Moammar Kadafi, or Iraq's Saddam Hussein after the Persian Gulf War -- their oil exports allow them to evade economic pressures or cushion their effect. The link between oil riches and bad international behavior is deeper than thought of.

What more when monks and others were being killed and arrested in Rangoon, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung,(whose representative always sits in ENC as a precious advisor) a German foundation, organized a Burma tour, in which, according to *The New Light of Myanmar* of October 7, "thirteen scholars with two from the European Union and the European Parliament" took part. The FES delegation visited a showcase "drug eradication project" in a remote corner of northeastern Burma, where, the paper said, they were received by "U Phon Kyar Shin," who, in fact, is Peng Jiasheng, one of Burma's most notorious drug lords.

The CEO of Diethelm Travel Asia, John Watson which specializes trips to Burma wrote, "Looking out from his hotel in the former Burmese capital, in the late afternoon overlooking the water from the Dusit Inya Lake Resort in Rangoon, it is difficult to reconcile the peace and tranquility against the images in the media of Burma over the last short period of time." All these conditions indicate that Gambari's mission is very difficult and that the Burmese Junta has overwhelming tactics and techniques from reaching a real solution. The very fact that Ibrahim Gambari's journey to Naypyidaw was not accompanied by Charles PETRIÉ who has been living in Burma and observing day to day life of the common people of Burma in other words a UN Expert is itself a defeat for the UN.

What if Ibrahim Gambari came back empty handed, will the UNSC be figured as a paper tiger knowing full well that the two veto wielding powers of China and Russia will use their veto to protect the rogue regime? or the will West just push around and restore prevent the prestige of the UN and prevent it from being another League of Nations is still yet to be

seen. If it chose the latter let us prepare to use the only option which the regime understands, the UN forces with the full participation of the people of Burma.

London

The views express here are solely the opinion of the author. *Kaowao Editor*)

Who Determines The Price Of Oil?

By Ralph Nader

Countercurrents.org: 07 November, 2007

Question of the day: who and what is determining the price of oil and your gasoline and home heating bills? Don't ask Uncle Sam, because George W. Bush and Dick Cheney are running a regime marinated in oil that does not issue reports which explain the real determinants of petroleum pricing beyond the conventional supply-demand curves.

First, let us create a historical framework to provide some background. In the good 'ole oil days, before the producer-countries' cartel in the Third World gained pricing power, there were seven giant oil companies called the 'seven sisters' led by Standard Oil (now Exxon) and Shell. As chronicled in Robert Engler's classic book, *The Brotherhood of Oil*, they were able to affect pricing through extra-market means. Economists called them a tight oligopoly.

OPEC later took their place at the table in the mid to late Seventies and set the price of crude oil at highly publicized meetings of the various member countries representatives from the Middle East, South America and Africa. Adjusting, 'seven sisters' concentrated their pricing and supply power downstream at the refining, pipeline and marketing levels.

Pricing power was never total but it was always complex, occurring in the interstices of an industry few outsiders understood, and fewer regulators could affect. Besides, natural gas was de-regulated between 1978 and 1993, after which its prices really took off.

Today, a third party has moved to the table-the New York Mercantile Exchange, a similar operates in London and a new one in Dubai. There, boisterous traders buy and sell futures contracts on the delivery of oil. But as Ben Mezrich, the author of the new book *Rigged* said recently, the dollar amounts of these futures contracts are far far larger than the actual oil deliveries they represent as they turn over and over at the Mercantile Exchange.

So now the critical resource of oil is driven by speculation at ever higher abstract electronic levels of futures trading. Increasingly, the distance becomes greater and greater between this abstract trading (fueled by rumors of storms in the Gulf of Mexico, or some possible political turmoil in a region of the world, or some other frightful excuse for bidding up) and the physical supply and demand for oil and its refined products.

These oil gamblers in New York and London try to justify their frenetic daily bidding by saying that these futures markets provide liquidity, and a clear price for oil. Alright, but who benefits when, how and where?

Certainly, the strain between physical supply and demand in recent years does not explain such extreme volatility. With OPEC countries down to supplying only 40 percent of the world production, Chinese demand for oil growing fast, and the expansion of production by Saudi Arabia and others to meet this demand, crude oil supplies are not tight enough to explain such pricing behavior.

Old factors like inadequate oil company investment in refinery capacity, longer down times for repairs than some observers believe necessary, and the slumping dollar are factors that western governments, especially the Bush regime, have not wanted to investigate. After all, with consumers paying sky-high prices for these fuels, free market theorists are supposed to expect expanded supplies from recoverable reserves to grow. But, of course, the global market for oil is anything but a free market from the producers- both corporate and governmental- toward the downstream companies to the consumers.

In recent days, the price of crude oil escalated to over \$90 a barrel, fluctuating up to a high of \$96 a barrel. Yet the average price of gasoline in the United States-around \$3.00 per gallon-is about what it was earlier this year when the price of crude oil was around \$60 a barrel. Why the disconnect?

"It's a big gambling hall," The Washington Post quotes Fadel Gheit, an oil analyst at Oppenheimer. "This time it's just speculation," Peter C. Fusaro, chairman of Global Change Associates, told the Post, adding, "There's a large bet out there that prices will continue to trend higher. But it's detached from fundamentals because there's no shortage of oil."

Meanwhile, the government of Big Oil runs Washington, D.C. It thumbed its nose at pleas from then Chairman of the powerful Finance Committee, Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) who asked the major companies, swimming in massive profits, to contribute some charitable dollars to help the poor pay for their winter home heating bills, and has smugly watched the major Presidential candidates avoid the subject in their debates and declarations.

Oil companies seem to spend more executive effort looking for oil by merging with other companies (note the unchallenged merger of Exxon and Mobil under the Clinton administration) than with developing efficient oil-producing and consuming technology or expanding their solar energy subsidiaries.

So long as the price of crude oil is set by speculators on trading floors, so long as the oil-indentured politicians are not challenged by new candidates standing tall for people and environments, so long as we do not protest for change and press ourselves to prevent wasteful habits and uses, get ready for higher oil prices.

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

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Dear Editor

Pakistanis to be careful before laying down lives

Ref: - (i)- Democracy will not come in charity.

(ii)- Need to be on guard against Indian example & media propaganda.

(iii)- UN / USA & its democratic allies can't be relied upon.

If Karachi mid-night blast of last week (in which about 165 persons lost their lives and about 500 were injured) was merely in a party rally where people gathered (despite warning, by every one, of such blast) in thousands around Benazir Bhutto to greet their 8 years self exiled leader and to show their allegiance to Benazir and solidarity with political party (PPP) which Benazir presides, then it is a different matter.

But if these lives have been lost & injuries suffered for the cause of restoration of democracy in Pakistan then the people of Pakistan ought to keep the following in mind before offering further martyrdom for democracy: -

(1)- Monarchies / autocracies (in any form, supported by armed forces) has been the mode of rule during entire recorded history of mankind. Democracy can usher only when people's civilian political power has capacity to overwhelm the armed forces of any country.

(2)- Democracy cannot come as charity. In India, democracy came & survived precisely due to independence struggle fought mainly under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi where large numbers of Indians were mobilized to become a civilian political force to

reckon with. (Though it may be a debatable point whether Indians, who never raised their guns for freedom and where their martial element was happily drawing salaries from their British masters during entire independence struggle, could have achieved independence in 1947 had Britishers not got debilitated after world war II to the extent where they lost every political will to hold its colonies).

(3)- Pakistan has been experiencing military rules now and then since its independence because in Pakistan there has not been any such mass mobilization of civilian political forces. Rather on the contrary leaders of its two major political parties, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, left and abandoned Pakistan in the face of pressure & threat from Military rulers.

(4)- But notwithstanding contemporary fashion of eulogizing it, the democracy in India also is skin deep only, as is evident from the following: -

(i)- Had Indira Gandhi not called elections (for the reasons best known to her only, but not the least, due to any democratic pressure) , not a single feather would have fluttered in India and democracy would have been buried deeply under the weight of emergency imposed in 1975 by Indira Gandhi.

(ii)- The hullabaloo raised by Indian leaders & journalists in its print & electronic media about death of democracy in Pakistan is due to simple reason that nothing is more relishing to constitutionally secular India than any news of political trouble in Pakistan as it tantamount proving that Pakistan (responsible in popular Indian perception, for 1947 partition and for terrorism in & from J&K) is a failed State (and all the more matter for glee if it is due to Muslim fundamentalism, allegedly responsible for said partition & terrorism).

(iii)- Here it is quite educative to note that nothing disturbs India when democracy dies in Bangladesh. Also in Myanmar India merely keeps government of Aung San Suu Kyi in exile on Indian soil and does not provide any worthwhile help, in the interest of democracy, to this government in exile contrary to what it provided (least for democratic reasons) to government of Bangladesh (another breakaway Muslim country) in exile led by Sheikh Mujib Rehman.

(5)- The commitment of USA and its democratic allies can hardly be relied upon. USA, which made an offer this year to India to form an alliance of democratic countries, is still a non-starter. It is absurd for any country to preach democracy to any other country (in the face of resistance to democracy from military rule) without giving any preferential treatment to it on account of democracy.

(6)- Moreover UN (which is situated on the soil of USA) has yet not developed a mechanism for the citizens of its member States for securing their human rights against its violation by the governments of their countries (by taking a lame excuse by UN that the counties have not signed optional protocol authorizing UN's intervention, as if it ought to be a discretion with member States). UN / USA & its democratic allies do not realize that democracy is not worth any thing if the people can not enforce their guaranteed human /

fundamental rights against the arbitrariness of their governments & judiciary.

(7)- By merely laying down the lives (without intelligently pursuing the mission in a focused manner) it does not lead anywhere. This should be evident from the case of Kashmiris also, who have already lost, as per media report, the lives of about 1,00,000 (even as per EU's report about 80,000) of their people for the cause of "Unified Kashmir". But so far Kashmiris have reached nowhere near it (rather now a days these so called freedom fighters are engaged in fratricidal war as is evident also from their last week scuffle in Eidgah at Shrinagar between two factions of Hurriyat).

(8)- This does not mean that the people of Pakistan cannot or should not struggle for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan. The only refrain is simple that if people of Pakistan (in their wisdom) decides to take their struggle further and are prepared to further offer martyrdom for democracy, then they should single mindedly focus on "Democratic Republic of Pakistan" without expecting much help & real support from outside.

(9)- Also people of Pakistan should be further wary of and on guard against any tacit or manifest understanding (independently or under the aegis of some foreign country / countries) between military ruler (Musharraf or any other future military ruler) and politicians (Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif etc.) in order to keep military ruler in constitutional position in one or the other form. Because this will render "Republic" as nothing more than a political fraud & constitutional farce especially in view of martyrdom of these 165 persons and of other more persons who are likely to lay down their lives for the thus chosen mission of "Democratic Republic of Pakistan".

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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.