Obama’s Refugees:
Nan Htee’s Mental Illness
Economy or Democracy: which should come first
A Life Displaced
Flowers from Burma (Burma Issues Latest video)
Protesting on Burma’s doorstep:
Nan Htee’s mental illness:
"Women, Be aware of domestic violence in your home!!"

By: Lay Nwe(Than Lwin Mye)

Nan Htee is aged approximately less than 30 because she still looks young. When she arrived at our Village, her hair was very long, down to her waist but, it seems she has not taken care of it for long time; her reddish hair was untidy and tied with a rubber band. I have no idea of the color of her Shan puffy trousers. They were dark and filthy. She was wearing a grimy blue shirt and I don’t know what was inside the rice sack. She had a passion in her bosom and pulled our village organizer’s hand who came with her.

When I looked at her the most interesting thing for me was her eyes. Her eyes were spinning around with fear and she was anxious about something. I was interested and felt pity on her. I stared at her and tried to find out an answer to why she was scared, but I forgot to tell them have a seat. The village organizer thought that I was afraid of her. “She is fine. She is looking for her son and also she is frightened of the men”. I just woke up when I heard these words then suddenly into my mind came the thought that maybe my eyes looked very sharp. After that I said “Take a seat. I am not afraid but I feel sympathy for her”. “What happen with her?” I asked. Below is the story of Nan Htee as I know it.

Nan Htee is from Ei Pan Village. After she got married they came to Thailand and planned to save some money to make a small business when they go back to their Village. At first they did not have a child and everything was fine. They saved money from their income from the hire of a paddy field.

When they had stocked some paddy and saved some money, Nan Htee gave birth to a son and then could not work like before. Her husband showed his true nature now. Nan Htee could not work and he said that they had to be economical. He never gave Nan Htee money to spend when they had some income. They saved money from their income from the hire of a paddy field.

When they had stocked some paddy and saved some money, Nan Htee gave birth to a son and then could not work like before. Her husband showed his true nature now. Nan Htee could not work and he said that they had to be economical. He never gave Nan Htee money to spend when they had some income. He always scolded his wife when Nan Htee could not do house work when she or their son were not feeling well. After he finished work in the evening he always went to get drunk and came back home in the middle of the night. We call it a house but it was not like other people’s house. It was just a small hut in the field and far from the village. It was lucky there was the hut of Nan Su near Nan Htee’s hut. Even though Nan Htee was living there she was afraid and scared when it was dark.

During this time she stayed quiet when her husband was drunk and quarreled because there was noone to help her. She pitied her son as well as he cried a lot when the parents are quarreled with each other. Nan Htee always calmed everything down but if she just kept quiet and patient her husband thought that she did not respect him and was not paying attention to him. Every night when he came back he created problems and beat her even if he was not drunk. As for Nan Htee, she did not want to let the people know about their problems and kept quiet but everybody saw the wounds on her body.

The time passed and Nan Htee got pregnant again. Her husband said that...
it was not his baby and told her that this pregnancy was a result of her committing adultery with another man. He blamed and beat her everyday. Nan Htee felt very sad and ashamed.

On day in a broad daylight, Nan Htee was beaten by her husband until she can not stand it any more and then she ran to the Village. Her husband followed and beat her until she had a miscarriage. Some villagers could not ignore this and they wanted to help Nan Htee but her husband accused and quarreled with them. Finally the villagers informed the Thai village headman and sent her to the hospital but pitiful Nan Htee was not in luck. She calmed down and was peaceful by herself even though her husband was still angry when her and did not come and look after her at the hospital.

After she left hospital, she came back to her small hut but the hut was empty and nothing was inside the hut. Nan Htee was worried and asked Nan Su who lived near her hut what had happened. Nan Su also did not know but said that he had packed the things and sold all the paddy then left with his son. Nan Htee became uncontrollably distressed and sometimes laughed, other times cried and was depressed. Then Nan Htee disappeared after she said she will go to find and bring back her son. None of the villagers could stop or keep her in the village.

She followed her husband to the other village when she heard the news about her husband and son and again she followed to Chiang Mai with only the clothes she was wearing and nothing else. After 6 months, she came back to her village but she was not the same Nan Htee they had known before. She was a person that everybody talked about. They saw insanity in a woman who still yearned for her married life even though he abandoned her and insanity in her grief that her son was taken from her. It hurt them when they looked at Nan Htee and she was waiting for her husband and son in the hut outside the village. We felt very sorry and did not want to see her in this situation anymore. We persuaded and brought her to the village and said they would help to find her beloved son. Can the community leader help her? Can they do medical treatment? We will be very happy for her if she is no longer ill and have sympathy for her as well.

Some men persuaded Nan Htee; who was vulnerable and faced with troubles to sleep with them. Nan Htee, followed the man who slept with her as if trying to replace her lost husband and the man shouted and hit her. Now she looks to be frightened of all men but the thing that she never forgets is her son. When she saw young boys about 3-4 years old, she followed and pulled them. We tried to keep her and persuade her to stay with us but she did not want it. She just stayed in her hut. We were concerned about her and thought it will become worse if we neglect and leave her alone.

That is why we attempted to help and brought her here now. Some villagers had sympathy for her but others believed in what her husband told them. Some said it is not necessary to have sympathy for her because she lived with other men so that is why her husband left her. Most people don't want her to be part of the community and rarely encourage her. When she went into their house, these people would force her out or even beat her. When I saw this I felt pain in my chest. We are the same nationality but nobody has sympathy for her and are not trying to think about how we can help our woman.

Nan Su explained this situation to me with a broken heart and tearfully. I shared this feeling with Nan Su, I felt hurt and sorry. The people around her are not even helping but pushing down with the bamboo until she sinks under the water. I promised deep in my heart to help Nan Htee. “Be rest assured, Nan Su. I will find the best way for Nan Htee to get medical treatment and to take good care her”. I saw the smiles on their faces when they heard my warm promise.
After that we communicated with other groups who give medical treatment and they took care of Nan Htee’s mental illness for 6 months. Now Nan Htee stays with her parents in Moe Ne city, Shan State. Even though her mental illness was completely treated, hunger for her son and fear towards men won’t completely disappear from her life and also this cannot be treated.

At the end of 2008, one of our members visited to Nan Htee village. It was good to know that Nan Htee is in good health and worked with her parents but it was very painful when we heard that she is still longing for her son. I was thinking like Nan Htee, how many women were faced with this kind of life? Even though we are the same ‘womankind’, we have no sympathy and compassion for each other. I want to let the women know and become aware that even though they did not noticed, saying just a few words made one woman’s life destroyed and caused her to suffer. I became aware in my heart that in the world there are still men who do not comprehend the humanity in women. They are shameless and always using violence against women. It is not a heavy burden to help each other, therefore I would like to urge the women to take responsibility and help each other.

Obama's Refugees:

A jobless Karen refugee family can’t pay their rent in the USA

By: Htoo Wei (Kwekalu)

Thein Shwe and Naw Dah are Karen refugees from Mae La refugee camp near Mae Sot on the Thailand/Burma border. They left the camp at the start of August 2008 and resettled with their four children to start a new life in Phoenix, Arizona.

But Naw Dah told us that she was now “full of worries and anxiety. We do not know how we can pay our rent as we have no money because we’re jobless. Last month I went to the social security office and told the authorities that we were unemployed and had no money to pay the rent. We asked our case worker to help us find work and he promised to help but a long time has passed by and my husband and I are still out of work.”

Thein Shwe previously had a job at a lumber company and worked there for two months. But, when work at the company started to drop, his boss had to let him go. When there were new jobs again, his boss started to hire other workers. But Thein Shwe was never given back his old job. “I am not sure if the boss will call me back for work again. It’s hard as I don’t have a cellphone and I don’t speak much English.”
Thein Shwe and his family are now facing serious money problems and can’t pay April’s rent of $765. He first started having trouble paying the rent in February when he contributed $300 which was all that he could afford. But he still owes the $465 balance to his landlord. During this hard time for the family, an office worker from the social housing department advised him to seek the support of the government. He took this advice and managed to get the Phoenix authorities to pay the March rent for him. But the family still owes the $465 from February.

Naw Dah said that “if we cannot pay next month’s rent then we don’t know what else to do and how we can live.” The family indeed still needs help and have an uncertain future. At the moment they can’t find any other places to seek help so they have planned to move to Minnesota to seek for help. But they admit that they still don’t know how they’ll manage such a move to Minnesota. Above all, they need to find work.

For years, refugee rights groups have campaigned to get more refugees from Burma properly accepted and integrated into society when they resettle to third countries such as the US. Ethnic minorities such as the Karen live in a state of limbo, unable to return home to Burma and denied citizenship in Thai refugee camps. Most refugees have been resettled in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland and Finland. The United States accepts the largest number of Burmese refugees.

The resettlement program is very popular for Burmese refugees in Thailand as it is possibly the only opportunity for them to get out of the overcrowded refugee camps and to do something with their lives. Some refugees have been living in these camps for over two decades. Resettlement remains one of the few solutions available to refugees who have been stuck for years in this inadequate and frustrating way of life.

But Thein Shwe, Naw Dah and their four children still face enormous challenges as they attempt to settle down to a life in a new culture while struggling to learn a new language and find work to pay the rent and ultimately survive in this new life.

**Economy or Democracy: which should come first?**

A discussion on how best to develop Burma

By Hsa Hay Tha

Ever since the military junta seized power in Burma, we have not seen any improvements either politically and economically and there has been no development in terms of healthcare or education.

Nowadays there is a wide spectrum of opinion on how to go about with the seemingly impossible task of democratizing Burma. Some analyze the situation and suggest that, to change Burma into a country with a democratic system of governance, we need to focus on improving Burma’s internal economy as our first priority. Some developed western countries as well as some NGOs agree that economic development must come first. It is their view that countries who have successfully traded on a global level are more willing to change themselves into democratic countries. This line of thought suggests that economic improvements in the country will naturally lead towards democracy as well. However, the many ethnic groups who are still struggling for political changes and national reconciliation firmly believe that any economy development will simply help prop up the junta and perpetuate its ruthless grip on power.

Those who support the democracy movement believe that no matter how much the military junta begins to cooperate with international community and open up trade, they will nonetheless continue with the oppression and exploitation of the people they are supposed to be serving. Today there are a large number of foreign investors in Burma who are indirectly
supporting the military junta with their business. Despite the influx of money, the people of Burma continue to suffer extreme hardships.

Health is a big concern – particularly malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. In terms of education, Burma lags far behind developed countries as the education system is extremely poor and schools are frequently closed down on the whims of the junta. People often believe that, when there is more foreign investment in Burma, quality of life will improve and taxes will be fairly spent on improving healthcare and education. But the sad reality is that the lives of people inside Burma are getting worse and worse.

The majority of people in Burma live in rural areas. In fact, 85% of the people in Burma earn their living through simple farming and agriculture but, since the military seized power, they have tried hard to put an end to the informal agricultural economy. After 1988, when the junta brutally quashed a democratic student movement, they started opening a market economy system. This coincided with the junta and foreign investors working together to develop industrial factories, partly intended as an attempt to change the minds of young people and to bring down youth interest in political and democratic issues. Since this system was put in place, young people have left their homes in the countryside and invested their time and money in search of work in the cities. Sadly, their dreams of comfortable city lives have seldom turned into reality. They continue to be economically exploited by foreign investors and the military regime alike. A young woman who works in a foreign-owned garment factory in Rangoon has to work 11 hours a day and seven days a week to earn just $8 a month. The policies of the factories are ostensibly set up based on international labour laws but the junta and investors willfully ignore these rules.

By looking at these stories and events in recent years we can clearly see that foreign investment is not the right way to address the dire quality of life and human rights standards in today’s Burma. Foreign investment only benefits the military junta, consolidating its power and helping to prolong its lifespan. Destroying the traditional agri-economy system and investing money in industry does not bring stable economic development but instead helps ruin the lives of the people. We can learn lessons from recently developed countries: we have not previously witnessed a country which has managed to transform itself from totalitarianism to democracy through economic development.

Amartya Sen, holder of the Nobel Prize in Economics awarded in 1998, said that “the main need for development is to put away freedom less, the use of power on the poor people, a lack of opportunities to work for a living and a lack of respect the rights of the people.” Democracy is the only way to develop a country’s economy – there is no other way. Therefore, the first and most important thing we need to do is to introduce a democratic system in Burma.

Only by introducing democracy will we manage to give people the opportunity to choose what they would like to do with their lives and how they work for their livelihood. Democracy brings fairness and equality in the distribution of essential things like education and healthcare. A democratic system is the only way to bring improvement and development to Burma.

(Footnotes)
A life Displace:
Always On the Run: A villager life in the arm conflict

By Pupu klae

Pupu klae was only 7 years old while the Burmese military regime offensive in his village call Zee Phu Gon in Northern Karen State in 1988. “I saw the army carrying guns, capturing people and making them carry heavy loads. The villagers carrying the loads were made to go with the soldiers. The soldiers demanded that villagers give them their chickens and pigs to eat. When I saw this I was really scared of them and hide behind my bamboo wall” Said Pupu klae

I remember one day hearing a loud noise and my friends and I ran to watch what was happening. I saw the smoke and Burmese soldiers. A bomb had exploded at a small car bridge that joined the two parts of my village which lay on either side of a river. I was told afterwards that the Burmese army knew that there was a bomb next to the bridge. They called 3 villagers to go over and remove the bomb. These villagers all died when the bomb exploded. For a few hours I saw people collecting the body parts which were separated in many places. When my mother and my friend’s parents found us they called us back and told us to stay at home and prepare to flee, because there might be some fighting that would happen.

My family fled the village several times to the rice fields or jungle when the Burmese soldiers encountered KNU soldiers in our village. When the fighting ended we returned to our home. At other times, if the fighting happened very suddenly, without warning, we would escape into a bunker that my family had dug behind the house to escape the bullets. Every house had a bunker. I remember playing with the bullet casings after the fighting stopped.

At any time of the day or night we would get warnings to prepare to flee because of word that the Burmese soldiers were coming. Sometimes the warnings came true and other times they didn’t. We always had to be ready to flee when a warning came. I was very afraid of the SPDC. Every time the Burmese soldiers came to our village the men would flee in order to avoid being forced to carry heavy loads for them. The women and children would stay behind. The men would return when the Burmese soldiers left the village. Some villagers who had been porters for the SPDC returned to the village while others didn’t. We were told by those who did return that some porters were beaten and killed by the SPDC.

My father was a soldier for the Karen National Union. Prior to the Burmese army occupying our village, the KNU soldiers would come and stay at our village. After the Burmese soldiers occupied our village in 1988 and took control over the area, the KNU soldiers lived in the jungle quite close to us (2 – 3 hours away by foot up the mountain).

My father would sometimes come home with other KNU soldiers who would stay with my family or who would visit us in order to collect information on what the Burmese soldiers were doing. We had to be very careful, because if the Burmese soldiers found out, they would say that we were collaborators and take us to their headquarters or kill us.

I remember seeing a Burmese soldier patrolling the part of my village where my house was. He saw my father with his KNU shirt and walkie talkie running away into the jungle. He accused my mother of being a collaborator and she lied and said no, that the KNU soldier had forced her to let him stay at the house in order to spy on the Burmese soldiers. The soldiers searched our house to see if we were hiding any military equipment, guns, bullets, or bombs. They didn’t find anything so they left our house and re-
turned to the other side of the village where they were staying.

I remember the Burmese soldiers searching my house at least twice. My father sent a message to the villagers to tell my mother that we had to move. My mother took us to where my father was living with the KNU in the jungle. I and my family fled our village for the last time in December 5, 1988.

We followed my father sometimes, moving to many other places in the jungle, and at other times we would move without him but with other families living in the jungle. We were forced to move so many times because of the Burmese army’s ongoing offensives throughout the area. I didn’t see any Burmese soldiers during this time, but saw their base which was very close. We would move both during the day and night. We did this for the first few months in 1989.

I remember seeing in the jungle a human skull. I was told that it was the skull of a porter who had been killed by the Burmese soldiers.

Both I and my younger sister got sick many times while we were in the jungle. We had diarrhea and fever. We were given medicine made by my mother from tree bark and other medicine from KNU soldiers.

My parents decided after a few months to take my family to a safer location. My mother, brothers and sisters and I moved to the Thai/Burma border where there was a KNU base and a village behind it for soldiers and their families, and others who were fleeing the SPDC’s attacks. We lived in this village next to the Moei River until the end of 1989 when we were told by the KNU informers that the situation was unstable and they couldn’t control the area at all. We were told that if we stayed we would get killed. The KNU arranged for us and all of the other families to cross the border into Thailand on January 1, 1990.

We crossed at night. I remember the full moon. I saw an older person who I believe was either a KNU or religious leader helping to organize the movement of people across the river. Many families crossed at this time. Some went to Hway Boh refugee camp, while others went to Kway Ka Lo refugee camp.

Life as a refugee in the neighboring country:

We stayed near the Moie River on the Thai side of the border for a few days. When it became clear that we couldn’t return to Burma because of the fighting in the area, we were told about Hway Ka Lo refugee camp and told to go there because we had no other choice. The camp was only a few kilometers from the border.

My father had a friend in this camp who brought us into the camp and we stayed at his house. We didn’t inform any of the Thai authorities that we had entered the camp. The camp leaders arranged for us to have food and later arranged a house for us.

The persecution of my family and I did not end with us crossing the border. In 1996 and 1997 the SPDC and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (working for the SPDC) crossed the Thai-Burma border and attacked my refugee camp. They burned the camp twice. The first time they used guns to scare people, but didn’t shoot them. Only a few houses and one monastery were left after the fires. The second time they used guns and mortars. No houses were left, just one monastery. People were injured and a pregnant woman was killed. Two of my friends (sisters) were badly burned and died a week later.

Each time we fled to a Thai monastery at a Thai village nearby which was also called Hway Kaloke. We stayed a couple of days each time, then returned and built a small hut next to the burned village. We didn’t have any wood, bamboo, or leaves to rebuild right away. We had to wait for BBC (it was just a BBC at that time) and some of the NGO people to provide us with materials to rebuild, plus some pots, plates, clothes, and medicine.

The first time I fled with my family. The second time I stayed behind to collect some possessions (plates and pots) because I knew after the last experience that the Burmese soldiers would burn the camp. After the first time we hid some possessions outside, near the camp (blankets, new pot, plates) in case
we had to flee again. Every night we had to prepare in case we needed to flee that night.

The second attack took place in 1998. My family fled to the Thai monastery however, I stayed behind to collect some additional possessions from our house. I was very afraid, but went back two times for our possessions. I heard gunfire the second time and was too afraid to go back again.

These acts left us always afraid and we had to be prepared to flee, particularly in the dry season.

As a result, the refugees peacefully demonstrated and asked the Thai authorities and UNHCR to move us to a safer location. Umphium camp was built as a result of these demonstrations and my family moved there in 1999.

The SPDC want to control and eliminate the Karen people. We have suffered under their persecution since my great-grandparents’ time. If I were to return to Burma, I would face the continuing, ongoing threat of violence that I experienced as a child and which continues today for those Karen people still living in Burma.

I have been a refugee since I was very young, 9 years old. It is 17 years now that I have lived as a refugee. I have no home to go back to. My family’s land in Zee Pyu Gon is under the control of the SPDC.

Life as a victim of arm conflict:

As a young Karen man, if I were caught by the Burmese army in Burma, I would be subject to human right violations such as forced labour and forced portering. As my father is a former KNU soldier, I face the threat of being falsely identified as a KNU rebel/collaborator which could result in my being jailed or killed if this information is reported to the SPDC.

I have never seen or felt that the Burmese military would protect me since I was a small boy. I have only seen them attack, abuse and capture Karen villagers. They are interested only in their own interests and those of their families, not in that of the ethnic people of Burma. In particular, the Karen people are fighting for their ethnic rights and self-determination. The SPDC does not recognize these rights and wants to have control over our lives. They will not protect me, a Karen man, from their offensive and abusive actions.

**Flower from burma: (Burma Issues video)**

“Growing poppies is not part of our traditional way of life. We grow them purely to support ourselves.” – Karenni farmer

This video looks at the situation of Karenni farmers along the Shan/Karenni border who have been forced to turn to the illicit growing of opium for survival, and at the role that high-level corruption and collusion by officials plays in perpetuating the drug trade.

Produced by Burma Issues January 2009 12 minutes 31 seconds

Anoucement

Burma Issues has just released a brand new video documentary on the poppy problem in Burma. Entitled “Flowers From Burma” it highlights the problems facing struggling farmers who have for decades turned to growing poppies to feed their families. Trapped by poverty, farmers today find themselves battered on one side by corrupt officials profiting from the heroin and opium trade, and on the other hand by the government eradication programmes which fail to adequately provide farmers with alternative development opportunities.

You can watch the video from our website www.burmaissues.org or alternatively, just get in touch and we’ll send you a free DVD.
For centuries, Burma was the crossroads of trade routes between China, India, Tibet, and Southeast Asia. Known as “the rice bowl of Asia” – the largest exporter of rice in the world, Burma’s steady economic progress ended in 1962 when an army coup over threw its democratic government and set it on a new path. Within 10 years it could hardly provide enough rice for its own needs.¹

As a result, farmers have for decades turned to the growing of poppies as a source of income to feed their families and send their children to school.

Trapped by poverty, farmers today find themselves battered on one side by the pressures of corrupt officials profiting from the drug trade, and on the other by government eradication programs which fail to adequately fund, train and provide access for farmers to alternative development opportunities.

Many farmers who have lost their poppy fields to government eradication face increased debt, and restrictions on access to food, healthcare, education, and basic necessities of life.² Their overwhelming vulnerability and the rising price of opium – up 11% between 2006 and 2007 - create a significant incentive for farmers to return to poppy growing. Current figures show that opium cultivation in Burma rose in 2007 by 29%, while production was up 46% thanks to higher yields.³

Focus must be placed on crime prevention, harm reduction and the right of Burma’s people to live healthy and productive lives. It is essential that the international community actively engage the State Peace and Development Council to ensure that sincere, credible and accountable efforts are made to end the drug trade and help Burma’s poppy growing farmers to achieve sustainable, healthy, alternative livelihoods.

Suggested reading:

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Opium Poppy Cultivation in Southeast Asia: Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand – 2007
- Burma Economic Review: 2005-2006, Sein Htay, Program Coordinator / Researcher, the Burma Fund, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma

(Footnotes)

¹ HTTP://WWW.BURMACAMPAIGN.ORG.UK/ABOUTBURMA/ECONOMY.HTML

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Opium Poppy Cultivation in Southeast Asia: Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand – 2007

³ ibid
Following the ongoing debacle over Aung San Suu Kyi’s arrest and show trial over absurd charges, protests were held in more than 20 cities worldwide on 18 May including London, Paris and New York. But, closer to where the trouble all began, a protest was held on 24 May in Mae Sot in northern Thailand, a place home to many Burmese refugees and exile groups and within a stone’s throw of the Thailand-Burma border.

The Mae Sot protest was represented by a number of different groups including students from the 8 August 1988 nationwide demonstration, monks who took part in the saffron movement in September 2007 as well as migrant workers and foreign supporters. Due to its close ties to Burmese democracy groups, Mae Sot has been under particular observation by the Thai authorities - it is a border town within a special zone subject to special restrictions.

This was the first political protest of its kind in Mae Sot. To appreciate the significance of this one needs to see that there is an unspoken balance and relationship between the Thai authorities and government of Mae Sot (and Thailand in general) and the pro-democracy elements from Burma living in Thailand. The Burmese groups are allowed to carry out their work to some extent, as long as they do not cause any trouble. Protesting in front of the Thailand-Burma Friendship Bridge would be considered trouble by the authorities but fortunately there don’t seem to have been any major repercussions so far.

The protest was organized by the Joint Action Committee (JAC). “Now we are so worried for our country. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s release is so important for the national reconciliation of my country,” said Aung Khine, one of the JAC’s protest organizers.

The demonstrators began at the gate of the Thailand-Burma Friendship Bridge and moved down to the Moei river bank which marks the border between the two countries. After a couple of minutes, Thai border guards directed the protesters away from the river and back to the bridge’s gate. Some protestors believed this was to avoid potential disputes between Burmese and Thai authorities.

“If we protest by the river, the Burmese officials working on the bridge can hear our chants. Also all the people from Myawaddy [a Burmese border town on the other side] can see us,” said one young protestor. “If the Burmese government sees the Thai authorities allowing the protest to take place, they will make a problem.”

Burmese authorities, dressed in civilian clothes, observed the protest from the bridge. When the demonstration returned to the bridge gate, Thai police had arrived with video cameras. They allowed the protest to take place for ten minutes more before informing the organizers that it was time to go home.

“We are protesting against the unjustified trial by the State Peace and Development Council and showing our solidarity with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Mae Sot is a very important place for Burma and, by protesting here, we are sending a powerful message to everyone inside.
News Briefs

The military regime persecute civilian in Shan state:

The Burmese army arrested and tortured villagers in Hsi Hseng Township in Shan State including village headmen and school teachers, accusing them of having connections with ethnic rebels, according to ethnic sources.

On May 14, a 15-year-old girl was raped by a group of 12 Burmese soldiers led by Myint Oo when she went to her garden, villagers said. The girl is now in Taunggyi Hospital in Shan State.

Local villagers said that Burmese soldiers beat and tortured them in revenge. Some villagers are still in hiding in jungle while others have fled to the Thailand-Burma border. The Burmese army also threatened local villagers that it would burn villages.

Two Burmese migrant died from Leptospirosis:

Two Burmese migrants Sa La Hin, 26, and Thang Hoih Ping, 21 have died in the Malaysia’s Juru Immigration Detention Centre from Leptospirosis. This is disease that is usually caused by exposure to water contaminated with the urine of infected animals, such as rodents, cattle, pigs, horses, dogs and wild animals.

The fact, that 2 persons are dead and others have been infected by this disease, again highlights the state of hygiene, cleanliness and healthcare at Malaysian Detention Centre.

Leptospirosis is commonly transmitted by allowing water that has been contaminated by animal urine to come into contact with unhealed cuts or abrasions on the skin, eyes or mucous membranes. It is a relatively rare bacterial infection in humans, health experts said.

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