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Retaliation Attack Killed Two Mon Guerrillas
Kaowao; June 16, 2008

Fighting again occurred this week between Burmese military troops and a Mon guerrilla group in Southern Ye, Mon State, killing more than six soldiers and leaving more than ten people from each side with serious injuries.

The Burmese military based in Khaw Zar, Southern Mon state killed two more Mon guerrillas last Saturday in a retaliation attack in response to the murder of their captain and two soldiers by the rebel group in an ambush on June the 10th. The attack occurred as the military ferry was departing and as well as leaving Captain Thin Kha Hlaing and two soldiers dead a further six soldiers from both sides were injured.

The two Mon rebels were killed when they found themselves surrounded by army troops under the command of Infantry Battalion No.31 in Eastern Ka Bya village, near Kaw Zar about 16 miles from Ye town. Beginning at 10am the attack lasted for twenty minutes, during which time the rebels' guns were seized, a Khaw Zar villager close to the military told Kaowao today.

An officer from the New Mon State Party based in Ye town told Kaowao that there was another attack by the Burmese military after their leader and soldiers were ambushed four days ago, and as a result they had sent more soldiers to the site.
Truth in Storm Rumors
Asohn Vi / Kaowao; June 16, 2008

Rumors of a storm that will initiate ongoing torrential rain have continued to spread across the community of Southern Burma, striking fear of another Nargis-like catastrophe into the hearts and mind of local people. As astrologers predicted, the first flood on the Gulf of Martaban occurred yesterday, June 15th, and was now headed for Mon-state capital Moulmein, and villages in Chaung Zon. Many villagers in these areas have ceased their daily work and moved to higher ground in anticipation of the great storm.

A well-know monk from Mon State two weeks ago alerted the people that there may be floods in southern Burma in the middle of this month and instigated the people for prayer service in every villages in Mon State, said a community leader from Mudon Township.

The state meteorology department warned yesterday that the heavy rain will begin and may cause flooding as it is expected to last 72 hours from June 15th. It also suggested that the winds expected to strike Burma's coastline were blowing at up to 50 miles per hour.

Fishing communities along the coast of southern Burma such as Kaw Mupon in Chaung Zon, Kalegaut (Kaw Lagut) Island were flooded last Saturday after massive storms blew in, the residents told Kaowao. This caused villagers across many disciplines to stop work. Discussing the lack of ferry workers and the need to retreat to higher ground, one resident from Chaung Zon told Kaowao today.

On the 17th of May a heavy storm washed away the three villages of Taung Bon, Phaun Sein and Thin Gan Gyun in Ye township and left over 40 people homeless in each village.

ENVIRONMENT: Durae Stream
Siha Ong / Kaowao; June 16, 2008

From a small wooden bridge near the monastery of Durae village, Kundit is closely watching the small fish jumping up from the dark grimy waters in the polluted stream below. She disappointedly observes that these tiny fish are trying very hard to survive in the foul smelling water. In recent years, the summer season has been longer than usual, causing the stream and plants to retreat further and further from the community.

On the bank beside the bridge there is a 'No Fishing' warning sign, but Kundit has rarely seen fish in Durae's only stream that circles around her village that had once supported a lush forest. She has been living in this community for over thirty years and can recall that when she was a teenager her village was well known as a model community because of its cleanliness and green environment. Durae is the biggest community among the 10 Mon villages that are built in neat rows that hug the Palean Mountain where Mother Nature provided a beautiful stream near which villagers could plant small garden plots on fertile soils, a place Kundit's ancestors had decided to settle many years ago wanting to live a peaceful and traditional way of life.
The Palean area comprised of Durae, Andin, Hnee Hnue and Hneak Grake, and was known for its success in practicing horticulture based on small family garden plots, along with fishing and salt processing. Fertile soils allowed villagers to grow and harvest rice, coconut, mangos, papayas, citrus limes, and most importantly betel nut, a much valued resource in Burma. Visitors were attracted to the beauty of Durae because of a stream that stretches along the length of the village community. The fresh clean stream coursed its way along the monastery from the south, heading northeast and then back southeast.

In the past during the rainy season the community would spring to life as fresh water filled up the stream that enabled the villagers to irrigate their local gardens, while laughing girls and boys plunged into the deep water. The pristine area attracted people from the surrounding communities to have picnics during the Waso Festival. The stream served the local people the year round.

But now the villagers are at risk of losing their livelihoods and their traditional way of life through government neglect and non-existent sanitation infrastructure. Today, local farmers like Kundit find themselves trapped in the long dry season trying to find enough water to irrigate their crops. In the past one could hear the sound of a nearby waterfall that offered crystal clear water that was safe to drink amidst the chatter of tropical animals and an abundance of colourful flowers. But those days are gone and the waterfall has long grown silent due to the drying up of the stream.

"There is less and less wilderness due to the area being turned into 'mono-crops' such as the growing of rubber plantations and the expansion of larger betel nut plantations built over the top of mountains," says local village Nai Yea. Like many places in Burma, firewood and charcoal are used for cooking but it is becoming increasingly difficult to find firewood near to the village community.

Many of Kundit's friends and the younger generation have left home seeking jobs in other Asian countries leaving villagers to hire outside help to do the manual labour in harvesting the crops. The village community was generally peaceful with social gatherings taking place at Bhae Taik, the Main Buddhist monastery, during festival time, but those have also grown less frequent.

The lack of environmental education and pressure on farmland being built up with the informal settlement of people from upper Burma along with government laxity in providing proper sanitation methods have contributed to the deterioration of the environment. Without preserving their clean environment through community-based education programs on health and management of waste material, the stream has become choked up with human waste, plastic bags, and other pollutants. But also, the rapid movement of people into the area over the past 2 decades without sustainable policies has played a major role in harming the environment. Many local people have built their homes near to the stream and have dumped their garbage daily into it without knowledge or thought of the consequences. In particular they have built toilets that drain directly into it being one of the major reasons why the water level has diminished so dramatically.
During the rainy season, Durae now faces more floods because of the shallow level and torrential rain floods out the village instead of running smoothly into the stream. People are aware now that flooding will occur more frequently as a result of the disappearing forests and soil erosion.

According to the World Bank, Burma suffers from unsustainable forest logging practices. Further to this, the country has invested virtually nothing into educational programs with a focus on the proper management of human and natural resources. Observers say that this will only increase impoverishment; Durae is a good example of this. A once thriving local economy is being denuded by a lack of proper government policies. Without enough rain and forest coverage to preserve the soil for moisture, the natural water flow dries up in a hurry in the dry season and betel nut gardens can no longer produce nuts without a reliable water source, threatening the domestic market.

Many betel nut trees have now died or are drying up and the villagers are wondering why. Villagers have requested the authorities of Agriculture Department to find the solution but even the authorities have no answer to give them.

Meanwhile in the streams the lack of fish will further damage the rest of the ecosystem. Fifteen years ago, Kundit and her friend could catch enough fish near the village, but today she can only see stinking water. Villagers previously used an underground well for drinking but the fresh water is not safe to drink anymore and those who can afford it have to drink bottled water from the city while the poor suffer more diseases from drinking dirty water.

"We did not have mosquitoes in the past, we did not have to bother with mosquito netting, but now at night we ensure our children are sleeping with nets," says Ahblai, a 40 year-old local villager.

As a consequence of water not flowing into the stream and more flooding there are more mosquitoes in the village and more people suffer from malaria. Due to unclean water, villagers seek local medics for the treatment of diarrhea and other waterborne diseases. Medics, short of medical supplies, are busy attending to patients suffering from malaria and diarrhea to a much greater degree.

The Durae Stream was a direct reflection of the village community that had represented the typical way of life of the Mon and is similar to other ethnic groups living in Burma. Fertile lands alongside river flood plains are areas in which people made a decision to settle down and build their thatched and bamboo homes. They tilled the soil with water buffalo, planted rice, grew staples and survived.

There are many factors causing the spread of diseases, but the major one is the drying out and abuse of fresh water which has caused a sharp increase in rates of malaria, dengue fever and diarrhea, a worrying trend for a community that once prided itself on a high standard of living in a rural Mon community.
"This used to be a high class area to live, but our way of life has gone with the stream. I see many people suffering from malaria and dengue fever and the medics are finding it difficult to attend to the needs of the people," Said Kundit, adding, "The water is too dirty and even the fish cannot survive."

Deep South Referendum Bombing Suspects Resurface
Asohn Vi / Kaowao; June 9, 2008

Two men suspected of setting and exploding a bomb previously believed to have been tortured to death, have resurfaced in a southern town in Mon state. According to their relatives, they now remain detained at the town’s police station.

Nai Cheem Mon (Show Tun), a former New Mon State Party (NMSP) medic and Nai Kyaw Tun were arrested after being forced to admit to the bombing during the May 10th referendum in Yin Dein (Yan Dein) village, southern Ye and were allegedly tortured with electric shock by the Army troops of Infantry Battalion (IB) No.31 based in Khaw Zar subtown. Most villagers believed they had died as a result of torture as nothing had been seen or heard from them since that time. Death as a result of torture is not uncommon in Mon state.

When the Burmese regime heard that most people in Yin Dein village planned to register a vote against the constitutional referendum, they positioned themselves in the area on May 10th; on the same day a bomb exploded near the school where the vote took place. After the explosion the military called all people suspected of planting the bomb to plead their case and eventually arrested two villagers after finding they possessed a VCD about the Saffron Revolution.

According to his wife, Mi San Aye, although Nai Cheem Mon insisted he wasn’t involved in the bombing, authorities ignored all pleas and instead detained him and subjected him to torture. Rather than hope for exemption, Mi San Aye had also assumed her husband had died as a result of torture, and so was surprised when she was recently able to meet with him. After seeing her husband for the first time in almost one month she stated that although there were no bruises evident, his speech was slurred and at times incoherent, possibly as a result of repeated electric shocks.

In a similar case the head villager of Yin Ye village, a neighboring village of Yin Dein, together with his three partners were arrested on May 28th and 30th and tortured until close to death by the town authority Infantry Battalion (IB) No.30. Their alleged crime was supporting Mon rebel groups in fundraising. All four men were given an internment on June 3rd after prominent people in their village acted as guarantors for them. The condition of their release is similar to parole; “They have to report and sign into the IB No.31 every week, confirming that they are at the village and registering their activities over the past week,” said a Yin Ye villager.

These cases are widely known throughout the Mon community around the world and have led to a strong call for both the Mon ceasefire groups and Mon rebel groups to work on a resolution. Banya Htaw Weang, an overseas Mon community leader from America, urged and encouraged overseas Mon using the e-communication tool of Monnet, commenting, “I would like to urge the
NMSP and the Hongsawatoi Restoration Party to find a solution on how to get along with each other and protect our people instead of going in different directions and allowing personal problems to become the priority. This is the time to work together.”

Many Mon believe a combined approach is required, as cases of unexplained detention and significant use of torture on Mon people increases.

More Nargis’ Survivors Flee to Southern Burma
Kaowao; June 9, 2008

Cyclone Nargis’ victims from the Irrawaddy Delta are fleeing in large numbers to Mon State and Karen State, Southern Burma to try and make a living, according to villagers from Mon State. Witnesses have seen entire families as well as single mothers and children all fleeing for survival, laden with heavy bags.

After Cyclone Nargis washed out the Irrawaddy, survivors flowed into Southern Burma from the third week of May until now. Many were trying to reach relatives who worked in areas less-affected by the cyclone, and head villagers were now busy trying to keep track of and register the sudden influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

“Survivor’s relatives and neighbors who work in this area have been calling their friends and relatives from the areas where the cyclone really hit hard. They have been calling them in large numbers, as now we have between four and five hundred new arrivals to Ye township per day,” a head villager from Ye township told Kaowao. He went on to say that they are currently hiring many of the new arrivals as cheap farm labor.

Aye Maung who came from Irrawaddy Delta to Mon state in search of a better job told Kaowao, “I’d like to say I am lucky because I was here (Mon state) before the cyclone, seeking work for myself as well as for my father and my brother. Now my mother and my sisters have arrived here as IDPs. My father is still missing. My plan before Nargis was not to bring my mother and sisters here, but we lost our house in the cyclone – which used to house all six of us – so I decided they must join me here.” Aye Maung’s native town is an area very badly affected by the cyclone, East Gone Hnyin Than village, Pyar Pon township. He added, “I don’t think we could go back to our native town to spend the money we earn here. I think we are here now to find a better life. We are here to work and live.”

Currently in southern Burma there is a lack of labor as high numbers of people seek work and a better life in the neighboring countries of Thailand and Malaysia. Many people who find themselves in Mon and Karen states for resettlement or in the wake or Nargis can now make a home for themselves.

A community leader from Kwan Hlar village, Mudon township, Mon state told Kaowao that there is a strong worker community in his village, with an entire block for workers which has doubled since the post-Nargis arrivals. He added that workers from Irrawaddy and Pegu
Divisions were appropriate for the southern community because they were used to earning their living in agriculture similar to that of southern Burma.

More than 133,000 people are dead or missing following the Cyclone Nargis, which hit Burma on May 2nd and 3rd with winds up to 200kph wreaking havoc and mass destruction through the Irrawaddy delta, Burma’s former capital Rangoon, Pegu, and some parts of Mon and Karen states. The United Nations estimates that one million hungry and homeless survivors have yet to receive any aid, despite the military junta’s many promises to speed up the relief effort.

STATEMENT: The 251st Anniversary of the Falling Day of the Mon Kingdom Hongsawatoi

May 27, 2008

Today, Mon people around the world observe the 251st anniversary of the Fallen of Mon Kingdom Hongsawatoi. In memory of tens of thousands of Mon who were brutally persecuted by Burman ruler, U Aung Zeya, at the falling of Hongsawatoi, this day is also celebrated as Holocaust Memorial Day of the Mon People.

In 1757, U Aung Zeya invaded and devastated the Mon kingdom by killing tens of thousands of innocent Mon civilians. Over 3,000 Mon Buddhist monks were massacred in Pegu city alone, while other countless numbers of monks, pregnant women, and children throughout the kingdom were burned alive in stockades or were killed in other unimaginable ways. The ruthless destruction of the Mon by U Aung Zeya and his army was similar to the destruction of Jews by the Nazis.

Although U Aung Zeya passed away over 200 years ago, his evil spirit (acts of evil) is still alive and well in Burma. The successive Burmese military regime has indoctrinated his evil spirit into its Army in order to launch systematic ethnic-cleansing campaigns in Burma. Over the last five decades, Burmese Army has committed various human rights abuses including rapes, tortures, and killings of the Mon and other ethnic nationalities. No difference from its predecessors, the current Burmese military regime has continued to nourish the U Aung Zeya’s doctrine and has continued to oppress ethnic people including Mon, Karen, and Shan. As a result, hundreds of thousands people have fled their homes and become refugees in neighboring countries and many more have been internally displaced.

This Memorial Day should serve as a reminder to the world about the Burmese regime’s atrocities against the Mon and its capability of repeating this history of horrors against the ethnic nationalities in Burma. It is our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the world’s community not to let such horrors take place again. In honor of the victims Mon Holocaust, who were killed during the destruction of Honsawtoi Mon Kingdom, we strongly urge the Burmese military regime:
(1) To immediately stop all forms of human rights violations against the Mon and all other ethnic nationalities including Burman,

(2) To immediately withdraw its military forces from the homeland of the Mon and other ethnic nationalities,

(3) To unconditionally allow international aids and relief workers in order to provide much needed help to the victims of the cyclone Nargis in Burma, and

We call on the United Nations Security Council to apply the coercive force as it is necessary in order to prevent starvation and disease outbreaks among over two millions of the victims of the cyclone.

The statement is jointly issued by

1. Australia Mon Association (AMA)
2. Euro Mon Community
3. Mon Association (Korea)
4. Mon Canadian Society
5. Mon Education Network
6. Monland Restoration Council (USA)
7. Mon Women's Association of America
8. Mon Women’s Organization of Canada
9. Mon National League for Consolidating and Aiding (Mae Sot, Thailand)
10. Mon Unity League (Thailand)

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OPINION: There’s a Little Bit of the Burmese General in All of Us
Lita Davidson; May 23, 2008

While the western world looks with disgust at Burma’s military, who pride themselves more on their self imposed isolation than on saving the lives of their people, the response of citizens and governments in Asia to the crisis unfolding in their region has been modest. There is very little in the way of a sense of urgency in the Asian media or in regional political bodies responding to the cyclone, nor of comment on Burma’s intransigence. Compared to reactions in the west, by Asian standards, the cyclone is a small matter indeed.

On the surface, Asia’s citizens do not appear to exhibit the same intensity of compassion on what approach to take in their media as we do in the west. In the west there is an outpouring of discourse on Burma; in Asia, this subject is fleeting. With the exception of the Burmese in exile, Thai English language news and anomalies, such as an unidentified Singaporean millionaire who on a whim donated 50,000 then quickly donated another 50,000 to the cyclone relief effort, comments from the Asian international community and general interest about the situation in
Burma is meek. Stories which are printed about the situation tend to be only descriptive and come across as an everyday occurrence.

In Asia, any Asian nation that undergoes conflict, human tragedy, poverty, war or humanitarian crisis, such as the ongoing civil war in Sri Lanka and the murderous political transition in Nepal and East Timor among others, does not garner much attention or bring on much collective spirit as would be expected from among the most powerful players, including the more advanced countries of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan, who potentially could change the dire situation given their massive economic clout.

With the exception of the Thai English language newspapers that generate lively debate among mostly ‘farang’ or western foreigners in Thailand, protests or critical analysis on situations or even knowledge about what is going on in other countries are mostly submissive and inward looking, rarely directed outward at the international level toward other countries. With the exception of individual scholars, such as, among others, Korea’s Kim Dae Jung and Basil Fernando from the Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong, people within Asia, don’t really care or even know about what is going on.

Upon closer scrutiny however, individual people in Asia do feel deep compassion when they see starving and dead children just as we do in the west, but tend to keep their thoughts private and are rarely given the chance to take action or voice their opinions in a robust way on international affairs. This writer has witnessed intense debate on how to tackle poverty and conflict, but like us, feel powerless to do anything about it. Generally, people in Asia come under close scrutiny by their governments and society; group and worker meetings take place every week in most Asian societies, their behavior is monitored by coworkers and their superiors and they are exhausted after working long hours. On average, most people in Asia work longer hours than people in the west. Freedom to do as you please is not encouraged in Asia; they are socialized to succeed at all costs.

One is also humbled on learning how Asia’s political scene for many decades was shaped by western influence in which leaders were advised to do away with agitators wanting equal rights and higher wages during the Cold War, a situation repeating itself with respect to China who wants to keep their doors open to western and Asian companies and who are reluctant to reform their exploitative wage labour system so as to suit the business interests of foreign investment.

In truth, the mild response in Asian media is due to the propensity of Asian leaders to refrain from judging each other too closely, fearing that each will be held accountable for their own weaknesses, which is inconceivable, if not an uncomfortable situation for most Asian leaders. Democratic will is further weakened by the educational system in which children are brought up to not question their instructor or an authority figure, they are taught to obey, listen and produce, and applying critical thinking or a different point of view on a subject is not part of their culture, not yet anyway.

A student expressing his or her opinion may be punished severely, although this situation may be changing as governments realize that critical and imaginative analysis are the basics of innovation needed to further develop their economies. While opening up and building
relationships based on cooperation with neighbours, as demonstrated recently when China visited Japan last week, is a step in the right direction to working collectively as a group, rather than against each other.

Burma and other similar countries might as well be on another planet or in a different part of the world. People in Asia may comment they have undergone much worse catastrophes. Why should we help them? We pulled ourselves out of poverty, why should we go to their aid? Even though many have achieved a modern standard of living, there is still a great fear that one day they will fall back on hard times and staying ahead of the game is foremost on their minds.

Most are concerned about their own country’s economy and compete with each other fiercely to maintain an edge over the other, being second place to another Asian country is unthinkable, like losing a soccer match. In South Korea the outbreak of Avian bird flu has been on the front page for over 3 weeks amid rising inflation and fuel prices, and the slowing down of the economy is more of a concern. Scant mention is made of Burma and the damage inflicted by the cyclone is not as vigorously pursued in the press as it is in the west.

The Association of Southeast Nations does not appear to take as seriously the massive operation that is needed to deal with the catastrophe and shows little sign of collective will on the implication of thousands of Burmese facing starvation and disease due to the Burmese generals’ paranoia to let in foreign workers. The cyclone is mentioned briefly in small paragraphs on their website, whereas in the west, it is seen on all government and regional websites with explicit detail and moral analysis; in most Asian newspapers, very little detail about the situation is reported.

The western press and many western citizens learn about Burma including its people, the environment, and the ongoing aid effort through their local newspapers that generates a lot of public opinion among the editorial boards. It’s a shame that Asian governments do not promote more moral discourse on what goes on in other Asian countries and compete more on democratic and humanitarian principles, not just economic ones; perhaps it is their history and their leaders, but their educational system can also explain some of their silence.

As commented by a Korean in the Korean Times, “Why should we criticize Burma when we fail to even criticize atrocities committed in North Korea?” Asian media is vigorously censored and does not encourage moral discourse; however, people can wholeheartedly think and are very opinionated about their governments and what happens in other parts of the world, surprisingly even more so than us in the west, but the term ‘constructive criticism’ is a concept not quite accepted by Asian governments who do not encourage it in any positive way.

Are Asian people morally inferior? Disasters and large scale humanitarian crises have occurred in recent living memory over local and international wars in Asia in which people were powerless against dictators and roving bands of invading armies bent on rape, pillage and murder. Each Asian country has endured untold miseries while the slaughter of millions across Asia such as in South Korea, China, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam; for much of the 20th
century these countries faced enormous upheaval which occurred right under our noses for many years while we in turn remained silent and culpable in their destruction.

In comparing the west and the east as most Asian and Western diplomats tend to do nowadays when it comes to the rapid pace of economic modernization in Asia, in particular, Singaporean and Malaysia diplomats, one can cite western atrocities committed in the name of religion, progress and nation. There are several horrific examples, many of which are untold; much of the 20th century was a nightmare for people in Asia, crimes and wars committed by western nations, no one is innocent.

In a recent BBC interview, Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani commented that the west can learn a lot from the east in competing, as being a model for growth. Yes, that’s true, but the east can learn from the west in promoting discourse on moral values in ensuring protection of people who can also contribute. Governments in Asia, especially from the more developed countries, need to exercise more leadership and to work collectively to address serious problems that affect the economic performance of Asian countries. Have not these diplomats realized the potential of Burma’s people who can contribute to Asia?

FEATURE; A Black Tuesday for a Fallen Kingdom
Asohn Vi / Kaowao; May 23, 2008

According to the Mon lunar calendar Kason Waning Day 8 of the year 1119, this coming Tuesday, May 27th is a black day for Mon people. It is the 251st Hongsawatoi Fallen Day, the Anniversary of the fall of their Kingdom. On this day the Mon people remember and pray for the enormous loss of over 70,000 of their nation including Buddhist monks, royal family members, leaders, ministers, soldiers, children, women and other innocent people executed in the genocide of 1757.

Beginning a few years ago, this day is commemorated by Mon communities worldwide, and deep inside Burma. In the Mon Kingdom of Bago, also known as Begu, where much of the Mon nation was originally based, Hongsawatoi Fallen Day is commemorated with a memorial prayer service started by overseas Mon and monks. Hongsawatoi Fallen Day is a common day for all Mon join in on the ceremony and prayer services, and is as widely attended as other important dates on the Mon calendar, including Mon National Day.

Mon organizations in South Korea will hold their prayer service for their Kingdom’s Fallen Day on May 26th, in Australia on the 24th May while places in Thailand and inside Burma will spend Tuesday the 27th of May honoring their fallen kingdom. The ceremony inside Burma will be mostly led by monks and youth, and held at their temple or pagoda as a candlelight vigil. Mon organizations in the United States staged a demonstration near the UN Headquarters in New York to mark the Mon Kingdom’s Fallen Day while other Mon groups worldwide held services praying for their nation which passed away over 250 years ago. Many prayers focused on not having to face such a genocidal incident again in the future, and lighting candles for a brighter life for future generations.
The music album of ‘The 250th Anniversary of Hongsawatoi Fallen Day’, sung by famous Mon singers, was released late in December 2007 after the publication of a commemorative magazine, while overseas Mon produced a video on May 22nd that collated images from previous ceremonies and prayer services around the world.

“We are determined for our new generations to know about our Mon people. We want them to know that we had our own country for a long time, but that on this day over 250 years ago we lost our self determination,” said Nai Layeh Rot, a member from the Committee for 250th Hongsawatoi Fallen Day.

The Mon are one of the oldest of the various inhabitants of Burma, and have marked their place in South East Asia with a powerful historical background.

Burman King U Aung Ze Ya conquered the Mon Kingdom, Hongsawatoi in lower part of Burma, ruled by Banyaedala in 1757 and subsequently seized their wealth and riches, burnt the historical golden palace, and raped, tortured and killed the Mon people. History books written on old Mon palm leaves and western historians’ documentary books on the History of Rangoon and the Mon, or the Civilization of South East Asia, all document the Burman King’s plans to uproot the Mon nationality and kill all Mon people.

In his book ‘The Mons: A Civilization of South East Asia’, Guilon Emmanuel wrote: “His majesty Aung Zeya was of a very fierce and cruel disposition and made no account at all of life. He put to death many monks, and their iron alms bowls, and silk robes were taken away, and the homespun robes were made into foot mats. Of some they made pillows, of some they made belts, and of some they made sails the monks’ robes were scattered all over land and water.”

He pointed out how foreigners expressed their eyewitness accounts of mass-executions of Mon monks in Rangoon in 1755 before Burman King U Aung Zeya overthrew Hongsawatoi. Successive Burman-dominated governments never wrote the true history of their leaders, but rather praised them as heroes. Conversely in Mon history, U Aung Zeya was a notorious and inhumane king in treating other non-Burmese people.

The idols of the Burmese junta that set up on the parade ground of Nay Pyi Daw, the new capital of Burma, were viewed as enemies by the Mon people because the Mon Kingdom, Suwannabhumi (Thaton) was invaded in AD 1057 by the Burma King Anawrahtar. The Mon Kingdom Hongsawatoi was invaded firstly in AD 1538-39 by the Burman King Tapin Shwe Hti and secondly in AD 1550 by the junta’s hero, Burm an King Bayint Naung. The last dynasty of Hongsawatoi Kingdom was invaded for a third time by another hero of the junta, U Aung Zeya, also known as Alaung Payar.

The president of the New Mon State Party (NMSP), Nai Htaw Mon, addressed the crowd at last year’s 250th anniversary of Hongsawatoi Fallen Day in the Thai-Burma border town of Sangkhlaburi. He said that the Mon people had continually lost their nation, citing the annexation of Mon Kingdom Thaton 200 years ago under the Burman King Anawrahta, but that the Mons could re-establish their kingdom. He went on to say that there will always be
opportunities for the Mons to re-establish the Mon nation, but they must remain united, and use better strategies and maintain a consistent commitment to their struggle.

Over the past 250 years there have been many battles for freedom, with many chances for land ownership and autonomy won and lost. These include the battle in AD 1757 led by general Tala Pon, the struggles led by Bayar Jaon against the Burman king Sin Phyu Shin in 1771 and to Bo Daw Maung Wine in 1814 right up until the British colonists occupied in 1824. After that all the other indigenous societies and ethnic minorities, including Burman, were colonized by the British.

After Burma gained independence from the British in 1948, the national boundaries of ethnic minorities in Burma were neglected and eventually abandoned by Burma. It became well known as a unique country where all ethnic nationalities were oppressed by the Burman nationals – a pattern which has continued until today.

The dark chapters in the Mon struggle over the past 251 years have seen a near-constant battle for their basic rights. Hongsawatoi Fallen Day is a reminder that the Mon want the world to know their real history, and they want self determination and recognition for the over 7 million Mon people living in Burma, Thailand and other parts of the world.

More Requisitions for Transportation of Military Regime
Asohn Vi / Kaowao; May 21, 2008

The Burmese military regime from Ye, Mon State has been forcibly commandeering villager’s transportation not only from southern villages of the township but now also from northern villages.

Most recently the regime has ordered Plaing Kee and some other villages from northern Ye township to loan two motorbikes daily for their transportation or face a fine of over ten thousand Kyat.

According to a villager from Plaing Kee, there are only 20 motorbikes in the village, meaning each motorbike owner must surrender their bike three times per month. Beginning last week in neighboring villages approximately 25 motorbikes were commandeered on a roster basis for use in official and unofficial daily activities by the Northern-Ye based Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) number 586.

Also in over 10 villages in Southern Ye a minimum of two motorbikes from every village must be loaned daily to the military. Three villagers have to stand guard every night at the village gates and market. If a rebel group is allowed to enter, or enters unbeknownst to the villagers, massive fines and threats are imposed on the guard.

The regime stated their reasons for heightened security in the region as being linked with an increase in rebel activity, including those groups armed with heavy explosives and bombs. Most importantly the regime seeks to protect the village paddy fields and gardens; with durian, mango
and pineapple now in season they seek to ensure villager’s crops remain safe from rebels, thus allowing the regime to pick the crops freely and profit from the farmer’s wares without shame.

**Overseas Mon Urge International Community to Intervene Under 'Responsibility to Protect' Principle**

Asohn Vi / Kaowao; May 21, 2008

The inhumane act of the Burmese military regime after the Cyclone Nargis disaster is a proper case for coercive intervention under the ‘Responsibility to Protect’, or ‘R2P’, principle, according to overseas Mon organizations around the world. In a joint statement released on the 14th of May they urged the international community to take coercive intervention under the principle, strongly suggesting it should be applied as a matter of urgency in order to save hundreds of thousands of lives in Burma.

The R2P principle was unanimously endorsed by 50 heads of state at the 2005 Un World Summit and states that where there are overwhelming natural or environmental catastrophes, and the state concerned is either unwilling or unable to cope, or call for assistance, and significant loss of life is occurring or threatened, the use of coercive intervention and the application of military force can be justified.

Board members of the Buddhist Society of the Australian Capital Territory and the Australia Mon Association jointly organized prayer services and a fundraising evening on May the 18th for the victims of Cyclone Nargis. Nargis ripped through Burma on May 2nd and 3rd, killing over one hundred thousand people and leaving tens of millions of people homeless.

A prayer service for Cyclone Nargis victims organized by the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Mon social groups along the Thai-Burma border was also held last week in Sanghklaburi, Thailand. Monies raised were donated to Mon monks during the morning service, so as to ensure they will reach victims left homeless and also go towards the relief effort.

Nai Hong Sar, secretary of the NMSP, told attendees at the Sanghklaburi prayer service, “We appreciate the international community helping our country and we now urge the Burmese junta to allow aid workers to enter before diseases follow, and also to help with rebuilding schools and other reconstructions. We also recommend the junta allow our free help in the worst-affected regions.”

More than 80 people from the Sanghklaburi community attended the ceremony and watched images and videos from the Irrawaddy Delta, Rangoon, Bago, Karen and Mon state. Over 50 copies of the documentary videos were shared with participants.

According to the NMSP, two schools and over 100 households from the Southern Ye of Mon state were destroyed by the Cyclone and they are trying to rebuild the schools.
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
editor@kaowao.org, www.kaowao.org

KAOWAO NEWS GROUP

Email: Editor@kaowao.org, webmaster@kaowao.org
Phone: + 66 81 561-0860, 66 83 322 5804 (Thailand)

Mailing address

P.O. Box 2
Sangkhlaburi
Kanchanaburi, 71240
Thailand

Website: http://www.kaowao.org
Archive: http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=1215&lo=d&sl=0
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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.