

KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

FEBRUARY, 2005

Karen Refugee Committee Monthly Report February, 2005

This February, People from Burma remember another February of another Century, February 12th 1947 to be exact, when Burma was on the verge of achieving Independence from British Colonial Rule. All Ethnic Peoples led by the Burmese were agitating for Independence. One movement, was the “Pang Long Meeting” of Ethnic Leaders at the little Town of Pang Long in the Central Shan States.

The Country’s Leaders led by General Aung San’s AFPFL party Leadership and including the Shan Saw Bwas, The Kachin Duwas, The Chin Chiefs and Other Ethnic Leaders met and signed the “Panglong Agreement” on the strength of which, the United Peoples of Burma are to demand Independence from Britain. Signing the Agreement were the AFPFL Leadership, the Shan Saw Bwas, the Duwas and the Chin Chiefs. But it is still a mystery to this Day why other prominent Ethnic Groups like the Karen, Karenni, Rakhine and Mon didn’t put their Signatures to the Agreement.

One Agreement provision which may be considered not too important at that time was that, any Ethnic State in the Union can have the Choice of Separation after (10) years as a member in the UNION of Burma. When General Aung San was asked, as to the Wisdom of including the Right of Separation, he simply replied that it would be just a “failure” on the part of the Burmese if the States find it necessary to want separation after (10) years of living together.

General Aung San didn’t live to see the Day of Independence for which he worked so hard, as he and many other leaders were cut down by bullets just a few months before Burma was given Independence on January 4th 1948. With Independence and Democracy flourishing, Burma seemed to be thriving for quite some time. Union Day on February 12th of Each year was celebrated with pomp and fanfare for some years.

But then the “Failure” that General Aung San seemed to have foreseen and considered not too important must have set in. One glaring factor that can never escape notice and that cannot be good for equality and “UNION”, was the gradual phase-out of minority Ethnic Presence from positions of Authority. At the time of Independence, a Shan Chief was made President of the Union of Burma (He was to die in imprisonment in latter years). Then again a Karen became president of the UNION. On Independence Day, Burma’s Army Chief was General Smith Dun, a Karen, who was made to retire a short time later and replaced by General Ne Win. Burma’s Air Force Chief was a Karen, Commander Shee Sho who was also made to retire. There were other High Officials from other Ethnic Groups like the Kachin, Chin and Shan. There were Ethnic Ministers, Legislators, and Senior Provincial and State officials. In the Post Independence Union of Burma, we have the Burma Rifles, the Karen Rifles, the Kachin Rifles, the Chin and Kayah Rifles which were gradually phased out. In their place, we saw the KNDOS, MNDOS, KIA, UWSA, CNF, ABSDF etc. To-day, after half a century of Independence, Burma’s Ethnic Presence in the Country’s Affairs can simply be called negligible. The Ethnic Peoples are simply “Low People on the Totem Pole”. They may be forgiven for having grievances, which are not without foundation.

The coup in 1962 by General Ne Win was considered to be one measure to contain Ethnic Dissent and even was supposed to have the connivance of High officials in the Governing Party. Thus, we see Military Rule or rather-one group Rule unto this Day.

Today, we are hearing a lot about the “Road Map”, which was initiated by none other than the now disgraced SPDC General Khin Nyunt. Now the “Road Map” Process is on-going with the re-convening of the “National Convention”, To all indication, this “National Convention” will just be an hollow event with people of Note, Capable Efficient People kept in Custody, made to stay away or simply de-peopled.

With its provision for the Military’s Leading role in all aspects of the country’s affairs, and the Choice picking of delegates, there can only be distrust and doubts about the sincerity of the ruling Junta. Mean time , the person who matters most, Aung San Suu Kyi is still side- lined- in custody. Then Many other leaders, opposition as well as Ethnic are behind bars, incapacitated, silenced.

Which can only mean that, the SPDC will go with their own way of achieving legitimacy and perpetuation of their own style of Rule over the country they call Myanmar?

K.R.C – Refugee Camps (Activities)

1. In the Camps, there are attempts by some unscrupulous people to cheat people out of their money with the lure of resettlement in some third counter. The KRC and UNHCR are looking into the matter, in the effort to find ways to stop the process and prevent expansion of this malicious process spreading into all Camps: It is quite apparent now that many people in Refugee Camps want resettlement in some third country as a way out for them from the uncertain situation they are in. It will also be what they considered a bright future for their Children. For that matter they can be easily enticed into spending money, which will not in any way help them.
2. Earlier this month, there was the Election for the Camp’s Administrative Committee in Mae La Oo Camp. The process was prolonged due to obstacles which came from many quarters , especially from some Sections whose people felt that the guide-line process was not Democratic enough. But after a series of meetings, discussions and alterations, the Election process in the camp came to a successful Conclusion. Still, some problem can be anticipated in Mae La Oo Camp. Many people see the Role of the KRC in Refugee Camps Affairs is rather limited, rather weak.
3. In Camps, we see families, communities affected socially by what can be called personal or family needs. Many people are going outside of camps to find paying jobs. Then many people got into trouble. In the camps we see domestic, social problems increasing and which are influenced by many factors like gambling, betting, lotteries video shows, Alcohol , media exposures, market practices etc. We see the Camps authorities have their hands full, addressing these problems.
4. In Mae La Oo Camp – there are about 100 New Arrivals who are being ordered to move to Mae Ra Ma Luang Camp where they were told that arrangements have been made to accept them. On their arrival in Mae Ra Ma Luang Camp, they found that there was as yet

no arrangement for their stay. Some have returned to Mae La Oo Camp. These people are facing problems which the KRC, UNHCR, the Camp Committee, will have a address.

1/2/2005: KRC Education Coordinator and KED combine scrutinizing the 4th and 7th standard Board Examination question for (7) camps school for convenient.

3/2/2005 : KRC Education Coordinator met with Mae La and Um Phiem Camp Principals discussing about renovating schools that have been destroyed or ruin. ICS agree to renovate (1) Um Phiem High School, (2) Middle schools, (4) Nursery schools. As for Mae La Camp, (5) High Schools, (4) Middle schools, (15) Primary schools and (21) Nursery schools, in addition of (1) S.E. school having agreement of it.

9/2/2005 : C.M.P. Quarterly Meeting was held. Mae La and Um Phiem camps, C.M.P. representatives attend the meeting, scrutinize and lay down the future task. We also enclose the decision which was made in the C.M.P. meeting:-

21/2/2005 : KED and NGOs Education meeting was held in ZOA Office, where they had discussed concerning having cooperation in Education matters and to assists school teachers furtherance and curriculums.

22/2/2005 : Noh Poe Camp would like to establish a Buddhist Mission School and this sundry matters was discussed by Buddhist school committee, KRC and KED committee at KRC Head Office. Establishing Mission school should stand on their own feet in superintend and encourage personally. As for Text Books, NGOs will assist. The needs of materials in constructing school will be provided by TBBC. Two years periods for Pilot Project and if it is success will continue perform it, is their promise.

25/2/2005 : KRC-Education Coordinator was invited to give encouragement speech to students of TPC schools, Mae La and Um Phiem No.1, High school.

Decision from the meeting.

1. Those who register in the camp and stay outside of the camp. KRC not recommend to receive the ration.
2. New Arrival and Return to receive the ration, KRC will scrutinize and will recommend those who reside in the camp to TBBC.
3. Concerning with other supplies, KRC submitted the subject to TBBC during CMP, meeting. But get no answer of it, KRC will continue submit to TBBC again.
4. Coming CMP regular Quarterly meeting P..G. Should submit their statistics briefly.
5. All the camps must submit their monthly account report in time for better and clear understanding.
6. Next quarterly meeting 9/May/2005.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS FEBRUARY, 2005.

| MAE SOT AREA | CAMP | No. of families | Over - 12 Yrs | | 6 - 12 Yrs | | Under 5 Yrs | | Total |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| | | | M | F | M | F | M | F | |
| | Mae La | 5,113 | 10,062 | 9,834 | 2,907 | 2,690 | 2,109 | 1,949 | 29,551 |
| | Um Pheim Mai | 3,350 | 6,316 | 6,007 | 2,137 | 2,061 | 1,217 | 1,102 | 18,840 |
| Total | | 8,463 | 16,378 | 15,841 | 5,044 | 4,751 | 3,326 | 3,051 | 48,391 |
| NORTH | Mae Ra Mu Luang | 2,058 | 4,481 | 4,047 | 1,367 | 1,210 | 956 | 937 | 12,998 |
| | Mae La Oo | 2,587 | 5,326 | 4,602 | 1,692 | 1,557 | 902 | 772 | 14,851 |
| Total | | 4,645 | 9,807 | 8,649 | 3,059 | 2,767 | 1,858 | 1,709 | 27,849 |
| SOUTH | Noh Poe | 2,210 | 3,918 | 3,951 | 1,261 | 1,157 | 822 | 871 | 11,980 |
| | Ban Dong Yang | 746 | 1,154 | 1,318 | 449 | 420 | 178 | 172 | 3,691 |
| | Htam Him | 1,583 | 2,443 | 2,658 | 1,009 | 1011 | 585 | 619 | 8,315 |
| Total | | 4,539 | 7,515 | 7,927 | 2,719 | 2,588 | 1,585 | 1,662 | 23,996 |
| Grand Total | | 17,647 | 33,700 | 32,417 | 10,822 | 10,106 | 6,769 | 6,422 | 100,236 |

RICE AND OTHER ITEMS RECEIVED DURING THE MONTH.

| FROM | CAMP | Rice 50 kg Sack | Salt Kilos | F-paste 15 -Kg Tins | Yellow Bean 60 Kilo/sacks | Chilies Kilos | Cooking Oil 200 ltr | Charcoal 20 Kg Sacks | Firewood | B.Food |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------|--------|
| B.B.C | Umphiem Mai | 5,546 | 7,386 | 923 | 289 | 2,306 | 82 | 7,288 | 245 | 1,033 |
| | Mae La | 13,508 | 17,866 | 2,223 | 703 | 5,597 | 211 | 17,689 | | 2,490 |
| | Noh Poe | 3,586 | - | 595 | 186 | 1,488 | 16 | 3,846 | | 668 |
| COERR | Umphiem | 250 | | | | | | | | |

We shall always be grateful to the Thai people and Government for their sympathy and understanding in Allowing us safe refuge.

We are also indebted to the NGOs for their Supports and Services.

BBC- Support in Food and Shelter Material. BBC is also supporting with warm clothing for all the camps.

MSF- Support in Medical and Health facilities.

AMI- " " " " "

ARC- " " " " "

MHD- " " " " "

ZOA(ABWaid)- Support in Educational facilities Teachers' Training.

Consortium - Support in Educational facilities, Teachers' Training and Education for Deaf/Mute/Blinds.

TOPS- Support in Educational facilities.

ICS- Asia- Support in Educational facilities and school buildings.

COERR- Rice and Educational support. EVI- to be involved with Extremely Vulnerable people.

H.I - Support for Refugee Handicaps with Prosthesis and rehabilitation and also year-end sporting events for Handicaps.

NCA - (Norway Church Aid) has been providing KRC with administrative & organizational Support. It has also supported with remuneration for KRC members and workers.

UNHCR- For Registration Process Protection and Ultimate Safe Repatriation.

SMRU- Support with Malaria Control, Prevention and Treatment.

SVA - to support with Libraries in the camps.

PPAT - Parenthood Planning Association Thailand-Supporting with Family Planning and Preventive/
Education in Refugee Camps.