



BURMA LINKS

CANADIAN FRIENDS OF BURMA
145 Spruce, #206, Ottawa ON K1R 6P1 CANADA
Phone: (613) 237-8056 FAX 563-0017
e-mail: cfob@cfob.org web: www.cfob.org

**SPECIAL
CONFERENCE EDITION
OCTOBER 2002**

CANADIAN FRIENDS OF BURMA Conference Agenda

Wednesday October 9, 2002

Crowne Plaza Hotel, 101 Lyon Street, Ottawa, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

"We all know that the road toward democracy in Burma is a long and difficult one. The solid determination of the democracy forces inside Burma is the best guarantee that this will eventually come about. However, the fact of such strong support around the world for justice in Burma cannot help but be comfort and help to them. Please convey my best wishes to those attending your meeting."

—His Excellency John Ralston Saul, Rideau Hall, Ottawa

Keynote Speech:

The Honourable David Kilgour,
Canada's Secretary of State
(Asia-Pacific)

Speech: Dr. Sein Win,
Prime Minister, National Coalition
Government of the Union of Burma
Councillor Clive Doucet,
City of Ottawa
Chair: Paul Copeland

PANEL ONE:

The Current Situation
Chair: **Harn Yawngwhe**

- **Refugees in Thailand: Displacement in Burma**
Jack Dunford, Burmese Border Consortium
- **Refugee Situation on Western Borders**
Chris Lewa, Asia Forum
- **The Situation of Displaced & Refugee Women**
Hseng Noun, Shan Women's Action Network
- **Political Futures: Perspectives of Ethnic Nationalities**
Chao Tzang, ENSCC/NRP

— A light lunch will be provided —

PANEL TWO:

Current Development Activities
Chair: **Christine Harmston**

- **Educating Displaced Burmese Children**
Dr. Thein Lwin, Educator,
Displaced Burmese Children
- **Reaching the Displaced with Health Services**
Dr. Cynthia, Mae Tao Clinic,
Thailand
- **Planning for Transition**
U Zaw Oo, Burma Fund

PANEL THREE:

Promoting Democracy: The Role of the International Community
Chair: **Joie Warnock**

- **The Campaign Against Forced Labour**
Max Kern, ILO Representative
- **Business & Human Rights**
Kenny Bruno,
Earth Rights International

• International Investment:

John Jackson, UK Burma Campaign

• Canada & Burma: An Overview

Paul Copeland, Canadian Friends of Burma

• Burmese Students' Democratic Organization

Representative (tbc)

(Note: Not all resource persons have confirmed their attendance and thus the agenda may change.)

...and for CFOB NETWORK FRIENDS and DELEGATES...

You are invited to meet

Thurs. Oct. 10 at 9:30 AM, at FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, 91 Fourth Avenue, Ottawa.

We have most of the day to hear about each others' activities, share our hopes and make plans for the future, in comfortable surroundings...

BE THERE !!

STRONG ROOTS, FERTILE SOIL FOR ACTION IN BURMA

Canadian Friends of Burma was formed 11 years ago, after Canada's first international meeting on Burma was held on Parliament Hill. Delegates came from across the world to tell first-hand of the tragedies and crises that cripple that beautiful and potentially rich country – just as they are doing today.

That meeting was held on Parliament Hill because of the symbolism of Parliament in the democratic process. By then it was clear that the Burmese military regime, which had been decisively ousted by the votes of the Burmese people in 1990 was not going to allow that triumphant election to be implemented. What could Canada's democratically elected MPs do to help? How could Burma's Canadian friends and sympathizers assist the Burmese people?

Under the auspices of Peacefund Canada CFOB set out to find Canadians who were interested in Burma's plight, help raise interest among others, and stir up awareness and commitment in the House of Commons.

It found people like Tiger Yawngwe and his allies in the Alberta oil patch who managed to get Petro-Canada out of Burma. Irreplaceable information streamed out from Kevin Hoppner, a young Canadian living and working with the Karen, under seige along the Thai border, whose meticulously documented accounts of human rights crimes being committed against ethnic minorities by the Burmese army reached activists across the world. There were students at Carleton University's Public Interest Research Group who, employing the skills and passion of the late Terry Cottam, picked up Burmese students Pepsi Boycott campaign and spread it across Canada, helping to force Pepsi out of Burma.

With Peacefund's backing CFOB was able to send contributions to the border and initiate its own projects. *Dirty Clothes: Dirty System* is an examination of the garment industry in Burma, warning purchasers to look carefully at the labels before they bought – and to tell manufacturers why they refused to buy clothes made in Burma. The problem of increasing numbers of Canadian mining investors nosing around Burma led CFOB to carry out a study of Canadian legislation governing foreign investment and why Canadian investors in rogue states are

allowed to raise money on the stock market – attracting investors who may not know, or care, that they are supporting a brutal, infamous regime. We argued that Department of Foreign Affairs could ban foreign investment in Burma under its *Special Economic Measures Act*. But DFAIT didn't agree and Canadians are still at the forefront of mining investment in Burma, working as partners with the military regime.

CFOB's strength – its ability to tell MPs here that Canadians want stronger actions from them toward the restoration of human rights and democracy in Burma – relies on people who are part of a well-established cross-country Canadian network on Burma (see page 3). From sponsoring refugees and making them feel at home in East Kootenay, to raising money at garage sales and Burmese dinner nights in Winnipeg, holding big information rallies in Toronto's City Hall Square, collecting money and medical supplies for border



refugees in Sarnia, to picketing stores that sell made-in-Burma clothes in Ottawa, and demonstrating outside Ivanhoe Mines' annual general meeting in Vancouver, people across Canada have found their ways of making their views known to their MPs.

But Burma is still in the control of a military junta. The economy is plummeting, with the kyat's value at an all-time low. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

is nominally free but her talks with the regime do not progress. The ethnic nationalities still bear the brunt of the military's fear and paranoia, and the call for their inclusion in tripartite peace talks seems forgotten. The National League for Democracy's 1990 election victory is becoming a memory.

And, in the 11 years since the first world meeting on Burma in Ottawa, how many hundreds and thousands of people in Burma have suffered and watched their livelihoods and lives disappear in the violence and brutality that still stalks their country?

If the promise of democracy is true change *will* come in Burma, because the Burmese people are working for it and because the rest of the world is watching and helping. Canadian MPs must listen to their constituents. They must make choices and take action soon.

ACROSS CANADA PEOPLE ARE WATCHING, WORKING AND ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE IN BURMA

Here are some of their voices:

VANCOUVER Eric Snider writes “the Vancouver Burma Round Table is a forum for any in our area with an interest in Burma. The group’s activities are self-supporting and from time to time we take on projects in benefit of people with special needs in the Thai-Burma border area. But consciousness raising rather fund raising is our primary purpose....

...“the fact that Ivanhoe Mines with its large investment in mining in Burma is headquartered in Vancouver has meant that members of our group have been monitoring the mining scene in Burma for several years now and Ivanhoe’s AGM in June each year has been the occasion for a public demonstration in which VBRTers are regularly involved.” celus@axion.net

MONTREAL Free Burma McGill is part of the Free Burma Coalition (FBC), an Internet-based organization with grassroots member groups and affiliates in 28 countries. Its student membership is pressuring the McGill administration to adopt a selective purchasing resolution towards Burma. Alvaro José Castro Rivadeneira says Free Burma McGill fears the economic and humanitarian crisis there seems to be getting worse, that the process of democratic transition has stagnated without significant change, and that international pressure, which was paramount in achieving the release of Aung San Suu Kyi has lost its momentum.

freeburmamcgill@hotmail.com

CALGARY Cham Toik, international representative for the Mon Unity League, now lives with his family in Calgary. The Mon Unity League, based on the Thai-Burma border, is an umbrella organization working for the restoration of human rights and democracy in Burma and campaigns on behalf of the Mon and other ethnic nationalities for self-determination and the establishment of a federal union in Burma. It is active in drafting a Mon constitution and mediating among the Mon people. ctoik@hotmail.com

TORONTO Toronto Burma Round Table members demonstrate, organize public events and raise awareness

about Burma and Canada’s involvement there, in city squares, the provincial legislature, auto plants and conference halls — wherever and whenever the occasion demands action. Members of the group are trying to get members of the Ontario legislature to recognize officially the Committee Representing the Peoples Parliament of Burma (CRPP) as the provincial governments of British Columbia and Quebec have done.

When Suzuki, the car manufacturer, opened a plant in Burma some Round Table members visited some Ontario Suzuki workers at their plant and convinced their union executive to write

to the executive of the Canadian Autoworkers Union, questioning management’s decision to enter Burma. The group comprises students, lawyers, artists and workers in many different fields, from many backgrounds.

burmaCanadian@ad.com

WINNIPEG Rosy Win, director of **Empowering Women of Burma**, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, raises funds and interest in Burmese refugees among her Canadian friends and colleagues. Her organization funds skills training for women and education programs for the children in the camps. But Mae Khong Kha camp has been badly hit by floods... “Many of our projects are affected — sewing, weaving, nursery schools, orphanage. One teacher was drowned... more than 300 houses were destroyed within a few minutes and it caused many people becoming houseless. Sixteen



bodies were found , and 26 were not found yet”.

To help restore this organization's important work among Burma's most vulnerable people send contributions to:

P.O. Box 2403, Graham PO,
Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4A7.

Charitable receipt available.
maymay_yee@yahoo.com

EDMONTON'S Burma Watch International promotes recognition of the importance of freedom and human rights in Burma and awareness of social, economical, and political life of people in Burma. With the International Centre, University of Alberta it marked this year's 14th anniversary of the August 8, 1988 uprising, 8-8-88, with a special commemoration and candle light vigil, at which Gerald Gall, Professor of Law spoke about "Justice and Human Rights". BWT's activities include working and information meetings, fund-raising, talks, seminars and video shows, regular updates on situations in Burma, and financial contributions to Burmese refugee camps. Director Dr. Alice Khin will speak on HIV/AIDS and problem of migrants from Burma in Thailand at the First Collaborative International Conference of the Burma Studies Group at Gothenberg University, Sweden on September 25-28, 2002. For further info, please visit <http://www.bur-mawatch.org> or e-mail **alice.khin@ualberta.ca**

SARNIA Janis Myint Swe, in Sarnia, Ontario, has raised \$1000 US to build a

school for Karenni refugees in Mae Hong Son. Janis herself raised \$600 of this and her friends in the International Committee in Sarnia donated \$400. The school is run by Father Mark Phe Bya, a Karenni priest. For years Janis supplied Dr. Cynthia's medical clinic for refugees in Mae Sot, Thailand with medicines, money and education support for the medics.

Jims@sympatico.ca

TORONTO Bush Gulati's Burma House serves as a venue for monthly meetings of the Toronto Burma Round Table, as a personal and academic counselling centre for newly-arrived Burmese and as an information centre for would-be tourists to Burma and the media. Bush was involved with Washington DC-based Foundation for Democracy in Burma and its twin, The Committee for Restoration of Democracy in Burma. He played a key midwife role in the creation of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma in 1990, and then served as its representative in Canada. In 1995 he helped CFOB organise a symposium, Politics and the Economy of Burma Today. **burmahouse@sympatico.ca**

VANCOUVER Four years ago Joie Warnock, a member of the Vancouver Round Table on Burma began her involvement with the Burma democracy movement as a participant in CFOB's exposure visit to the Thai Burma border, on behalf of the Humanity Fund of her union, the Communications Energy and Paper-

workers Union. She is now on the board of the Vancouver's Canada Asia Pacific Resource Network (CAPRN), and took part in a visit by Canadian labour activists to the border a year ago. "I look forward to working with activists here in Canada and globally to strengthen our links and continue our work politically to pressure our government to take a stronger leadership role on the issue of a free and democratic Burme," Joie says. **joie_warnock@telus.ca**

OTTAWA The Chin Forum, founded at the first Chin Seminar held in Ottawa 1989, works to strengthen unity among themselves and other democratic forces in Burma. It has working groups on Constitution Drafting, Communications and Information, Economic Development, Health, Education and Historical Research and Cultural Preservation. Its secretary Salai Victor Biak Lian is also a member of the board of directors for the *Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)* which publishes Rhododendron Human Rights News Bulletin six times a year and is distributed worldwide. It monitors the human rights situation within Burma and in the neighbouring areas such as India and Bangladesh. Its members regularly attend the United Nations Human Rights Commission sessions and the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous people in Geneva as well as various other international conferences.

Canadian Friends of Burma Donation Form

Support us! Please complete and mail with a cheque or money order made payable to CFOB. CFOB depends on concerned people like you. You will receive our newsletters and help CFOB continue to play a lead role in Canada in working for justice in Burma.

Cannot pay but still wish to receive newsletter Would like to receive newsletter by e-mail or hard copy

Name: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ Fax: _____

Organization (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

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