PRESS RELEASE

New publication shows ways to empower Burmese grassroots organizations in exile

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 21, 2011. The Czech NGO Burma Center Prague is today launching a publication entitled "Helping Burma Through India" featuring a variety of articles. The authors look back at three years of the "Indian Base for the Transformation of Burma" project and analyze the situation of Burmese refugees and grassroots organizations in India. The publication and its underlying project seek to fill a lack of global attention on these issues.

"We are glad for the opportunity to be active in this field and to learn from our local partners while we try to help," says Christoph Amthor, head of the project. "In these three years we have managed to establish, in India, a new corridor for help for Burma from the Czech Republic, which is one of the most outspoken supporters of democracy in Burma."

The publication is being presented to the public at an event in Vikaspuri, one of the main areas where Burmese refugees reside in Delhi, and aims to highlight the problems faced by refugees from Burma who live in India. It also tries to point out ways that they, as active members of civil society, can contribute to the transformation of Burma towards a genuine and participative democracy.

Burma Center Prague has been implementing this concept in India since 2009. The obvious need for support of Burmese refugees and civil society structures in the world's largest democracy has led to a three-year project that is predominantly supported by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the publication, the authors discuss the lives of refugees among the Indian majority population, the situation of refugee women in Northeast India, the lack of health care and education for Burmese in Delhi, and the work of Burmese exile media. Two further articles describe the development of the project and its activities, and make the connection between the Czech experience of transition and the case of Burma.

"Looking back, this project can be seen as a best practice of joining Burmese, European, and Indian democratic forces together for the improvement of refugees' lives, and supporting them in their promotion of democracy in Burma," says Sabe Soe, director of Burma Center Prague. "We particularly emphasize the fact that there are millions of Burmese migrants around the world, and their capacity and experience of democracy will play a major role in the future of Burma."

The publication can be downloaded as PDF at http://www.burma-center.org/documents/Helping-Burma-Through-India-2011-web.pdf**.**

Background

Burma Center Prague, a non-governmental organization based in the Czech Republic, launched its three-year Indian Base for the Transformation of Burma project in 2009, to respond to the dramatic situation of Burmese refugees living in Delhi and Northeast India and to the famine in Chin State in Northwestern Burma. India's important position as a partner of the Burmese regime and as the world's largest democracy led to the conclusion that support for democracy in Burma should also be strengthened from Burma's Western side.

The main goal of the project was establishing and supporting professional structures in India that promote the transition of Burma to a democracy, by networking with other civil society organizations and through capacity

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building for activists and journalists. Other activities included offering sustainable aid to Burmese refugee communities living in India through fair trade and the provision of microgrants, as well as running a fundraising campaign for victims of the famine in Chin State.

Information for journalists

If you are interested in obtaining an interview with the staff or director of Burma Center Prague, Mrs. Sabe Soe, please contact the office:

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