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# Assam Times contributor gets UNHCR-CNES fellowship

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The Guwahati based journalist and a regular contributor to 'Assam Times', Nava Thakuria has been awarded with the first media fellowship on refugee issues sponsored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES). The Fellowship with the theme, 'The Chins of Myanmar: Refugee Life in a Distant Neighbour', with a focus on Protection and Durable Solutions for the Chin ethnic group from Western Myanmar, which lives in challenging conditions in the Northeast as well as in New Delhi starts from 1 March to 31 May.

The announcement was made by a Committee comprising Mr. Sanjoy Hazarika, C-NES Managing Trustee, journalist and editor, Ms. Pamela Philipose, Independent Journalist and Ms. Nayana Bose of the UNHCR on February 15 last. The awardee Mr Thakuria has written extensively on issues related to Burma (Myanmar). Thakuria is a regular contributor to many acclaimed newspaper and portals based in Guwahati, Kolkata, New Delhi, Dhaka, Hong Kong, Seoul, London and California and his special areas of interest include socio-political developments in Northeast India with Burma, Bhutan and Bangladesh

It may be mentioned that Mizoram, a Burma bordering Northeast Indian state gives shelter to nearly 40,000 Chin refugees. Those Burmese citizens fled their country to get rid of the atrocities of the present regime named State Peace and Development Council. Led by the Senior General Than Shwe, the SPDC is identified as one of the worst human rights violators in the globe.

The refugees started fleeing Burma after the 1988 uprising for restoration of democracy in the land of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Thousand of Burmese have already sacrificed their precious lives supporting the pro-democracy movement led by the Great Lady. Many of them left Burma to live an exile live in its neighbouring Thailand, India, Bangladesh and many other countries around the globe.

"The effort is to build capacity and better understanding among journalists interested in refugee issues, especially at the middle-level, but also to publish their findings and observations extensively in the Indian media," said Sanjoy Hazarika, Managing Trustee of C-NES. It is an opportunity for the journalist to look at issues relating to refugee movements into the country, the

condition of refugees, the problems of mixed migration (refugee movements combined with economic/environmental international migrants).

Carol Batchelor, Chief of Mission, UNHCR India, while mentioning the fellowship to study the refugee issue said, "It is hoped that through this opportunity for an in-depth review of refugee issues, journalists will be strengthened in their efforts to inform public opinion." There are two other fellowships, applications for which are welcome, one on "The need for a refugee specific legislation in India" (to be announced in May 2008) and another on Sri Lankan refugees (to be announced in August 2008). The programme is aimed to research and write on the issue comprising the protection and durable solution of the refugee problem.

*Photo: UB Photos*

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**editor**

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