

***For immediate release, (Fuller Report + linked photos at <http://www.worldharmonyrun.org/myanmar/news/2012/0121>)
Yangon, Myanmar, 21 Jan 2012***

Today well over 100 individuals from more than 20 countries, joined with family members of former United Nations Secretary General U Thant in Yangon. UN dignitaries, international singers, interfaith leaders and local community members participated in programs at two locations: a local Buddhist monastery and the U Thant Mausoleum.

The morning event was a “Soong Kway” (Merit Making Ceremony) to honor the memory of U Thant, Third Secretary-General of the United Nations, in celebration of his 103rd Birth Anniversary . It was held at Aein Daw Ya Monastery, Deckhinayone Monastic School, Myoma Kyaung Street, organized by Daw Aye Aye Thant, U Thant’s daughter and President of the U Thant Institute along with Members of the Pantanaw Association.

Mr. Bikashita Bill Hass, the Vice president of the U Thant Institute, and former UN official acted as Master of Ceremonies and introduced performers and guest speakers. He also drew the participant’s attention to the statements from U Thant in which the former Secretary-General attached “the greatest importance to spiritual values”.

After the Buddhist ceremony, the visiting international meditation choir, performed songs by spiritual leader Sri Chinmoy, dedicated to U Thant.

Representatives of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam offered traditional blessings and prayers. Daw Aye Aye expressed her gratitude that in this Buddhist Place of worship, individuals from other religions participated which was very much in keeping with her father’s support for the deepest values in all religions and interfaith cooperation.

In 1970, U Thant invited Sri Chinmoy to conduct peace meditations at UN Headquarters in New York for delegates and staff. Both men shared an appreciation of moral and spiritual values. Sri Chinmoy composed the following song in honor of U Thant on 1 April 1976.

U Thant, U Thant,
We love your silence-soul,
We loved your compassion-heart.
Your world-harmony role
Challenged ignorance-dart.
U.N. pilot supreme,
You treasured perfection-dream.



Sri Chinmoy and U Thant, 29 Feb. 1972

Sri Chinmoy also set to music the following two immortal utterances of U Thant which were performed as part of the day’s events.

“Gone are the days when each Nation was an island unto itself.”

“In the wake of the most catastrophic war in the history of mankind, humanity had a new Vision: it saw the glimmer of dawn of a warless world.”

The second ceremony, was to pay respects to U Thant’s Mausoleum on Shwedagon Pagoda Road.

Floral Arrangements were placed and there was an opportunity for individuals to meditate for a moment and place individual flowers.

Also present at the mausoleum were many members of the World Harmony Run teams which have visited over 140 countries since it was founded in 1987 by Sri Chinmoy. This Global torch relay seeks to strengthen international friendship and understanding. As a symbol of peace and harmony, runners carry a flaming torch, passing it from hand to hand around the globe.

The Harmony Run presents a “Torch Bearer” award to recognize individuals’ contributions to peace and harmony. Daw Aye Aye had received the Torch Bearer Award while in the United States. Today she held one of the torches with international team members inside the mausoleum. The banner shows it is the 25th anniversary of the founding of the World Harmony Run..

There was also a group photo outside with many members of the international World Harmony Run teams, Peace Meditation at the United Nations and Sri Chinmoy Centers from around the world.

For further Information, please visit the following web sites:

www.uthantinstitute.org
www.worldharmonyrun.org
www.srichinmoy.org

Following is an excerpt from U Thant’s farewell message to UN staff on 17 December 1971, at the end of his term as Secretary-General.

“I would attach greater importance to moral qualities or moral virtues over intellectual qualities or intellectual virtues -- moral qualities, like love, compassion, understanding, tolerance, the philosophy of live-and-let-live, the ability to understand the other man's point of view, which are the key to all great religions. And above all, I would attach the greatest importance to spiritual values.... faith in oneself, the purity of one's inner self, which to me is the greatest virtue of all. With this approach, with this philosophy, with this concept alone, we will be able to fashion the kind of society we want, the kind of society which was envisaged by the founding fathers [of the United Nations].” [UN/STB/261]

Below is an excerpt from remarks made by U Thant as guest of honor at the premiere performance of Sri Chinmoy’s play “Siddhartha Becomes the Buddha”, offered on 25 May 1973 in Harrison, New York.

“Sri Chinmoy has done a most remarkable job in presenting the play in simple language understandable even to the uninitiated. His stress on the basic characteristics of Buddhism – on compassion, love, renunciation, peace – should stimulate the thoughts of leaders of men and leaders of thought everywhere..... I feel very strongly that only by the practical application of the teachings of great religious leaders, particularly the development of the moral and spiritual aspects of life as Sri Chinmoy has stressed in the play – love, compassion, tolerance, the philosophy of live-and-let-live, modesty and even humility – that only with this approach will we all be able to fashion the kind of society we want, a truly moral society, a decent society, a liveable society, which is the goal of all great religions”. From: *Meditation at the United Nations*, November 27 1974 , Volume 2, Number 11, Periodic Bulletin of Sri Chinmoy: the Peace Meditation at the UN. [Also in *U Thant: Divinity’s Smile, Humanity’s Cry*, Sri Chinmoy. Agni Press, New York, 1977]

Fuller report with linked photos also appears at: <http://www.worldharmonyrun.org/myanmar/news/2012/0121>