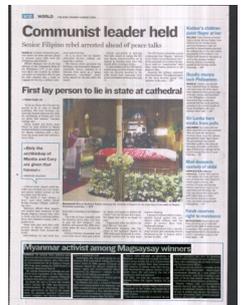


Headline	Myanmar activist among Magsaysay winners	Language	English
Date	04 Aug 2009	Page No	30
MediaTitle	The Star	Article Size	164 cm²
Section	World	Color	Black/white
Journalist	N/A	PRValue	8,932
Frequency	Daily		
ADValue	2,977		



Myanmar activist among Magsaysay winners

MANILA: An activist from military-ruled Myanmar who has documented human rights and environmental abuses, and a Thai scientist who devoted her life to finding a cheaper AIDS drug, were among the 2009 winners of the Ramon Magsaysay Awards.

The awards announced yesterday are considered Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. They are named after a popular Philippine president who died in a plane crash in 1957.

Ka Hsaw Wa was a 17-year-old student activist during the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations in Myanmar. After his arrest and torture, he fled to the jungle where he exposed atrocities committed against villagers, the Ramon Magsaysay

Award Foundation said.

EarthRights, the non-profit group he co-founded, filed a precedent-setting case in the United States in 1996 against US-based oil company Unocal for alleged complicity in human rights and environmental abuses

committed by Myanmar's military in the building of the Yadana gas pipeline.

After 10 years of litigation, Unocal agreed to compensate the 11 petitioners.

EarthRights also runs a school in Thailand that trains young people from Myanmar and other countries in non-violent social change.

Krisana Kraisintu, a Thai pharmacologist, was honoured for working to produce much-needed generic drugs to fight HIV/AIDS.

When AIDS became an epidemic in Thailand, she conducted research on antiretroviral drugs despite the lack of government support and lawsuits from drug companies. After months of solitary work, she successfully formulated the generic version of AZT, which treats HIV and reduces the risk of mother-to-child transmission.

In 2002, she took her expertise to sub-Saharan Africa, the region hardest hit by AIDS.

Other winners include India's Deep Joshi, recognised for his "vision and leadership in bringing professionalism to the NGO movement in India".

Two Chinese were also honoured. Ma Jun, a former journalist, was cited for launching the first public database on water pollution in China and establishing the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs.

Yu Xiaogang was cited as a founder of the non-profit Green Watershed – which helped communities flooded by a dam project in Yunnan province – and Green Banking, a network of NGOs that awards banks for their contributions to environmental protection.

Filipino lawyer and environmentalist Antonio Oposa Jr was cited for his efforts to help his countrymen "maximise the power of the law to protect and nurture the environment for themselves, their children and generations still to come". — AP