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**Cultural Festival at The Textile Museum Celebrates
59th Anniversary of Chin National Day
Saturday, February 17, 1-4 pm**

January 19, 2007, Washington, DC — The Textile Museum will hold a cultural festival on Saturday, February 17 from 1-4 pm to celebrate the 59th anniversary of Chin National Day. This **free festival for all ages** features traditional Chin dance and music as well as refreshments and hands-on activities. The festival is planned in collaboration with the local Chin community and in conjunction with the current Textile Museum exhibition *Mantles of Merit: Chin Textiles from Mandalay to Chittagong*.

Visitors to the festival can enjoy watching the *ruakha tlak*, or bamboo dance, performed to celebrate someone's life, the *roktuu* dance, which demonstrates sowing seeds at a traditional field, and more. Chin community members, dressed in traditional textiles, will describe what they are wearing and younger hands can decorate a mantle, or tunic, to bring home.

All activities are free and open to the public.

About the Chin

The Chin are an ethnic minority group comprised of some two million people speaking 44 dialects that live in western Myanmar (formerly Burma), northeastern India and eastern Bangladesh. A local community of Chin peoples is based in the Silver Spring, MD area. Despite commonalities of language and culture, the various Chin groups are broadly dispersed over the adjacent hills of three countries, speak many dialects and have textile traditions that vary widely.

Owing to the work of the American Baptist Churches (previously known as American Baptist Missionaries), 70% to 90% of the Chin population now identify themselves as Christian. Rev. and Mrs.



Representatives of the local Chin community will perform traditional dance and music during the event.



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Carson were the first missionaries to arrive in Haka, the present Chin State capital, in March 1899. The last missionaries were forced out of Myanmar (Burma) by the Burmese military regime in May 1966. In addition to Christianity, a sizeable Chin minority adhere to their traditional animist beliefs and Theravada Buddhism.

About Chin National Day

Chin National Day is celebrated on February 20 in anniversary of the transformation from a hereditary system of aristocracy to a democratic election system. In February 1947 the Panglong Agreement was signed by representatives of the Chin, Kachin, Shan and Burmese territories to free them from British control. The following year, in February 1948, the Chin Conference abolished the hereditary system of aristocracy in favor of a democratic election system in all levels of government. Today Chin National Day is the most widely celebrated festival among the Chin as a source of unity for the people. It has become a day to reflect on their national identity and extend their wish to live in peaceful coexistence with other ethnic and religious groups.

About the Exhibition

Mantles of Merit: Chin Textiles from Mandalay to Chittagong includes nearly 80 ceremonial mantles, tunics and other garments as well as contemporary and historic photographs, jewelry and accessories worn with the textiles. It is the first major exhibition devoted to the textiles of the Chin. Textiles play a central role in Chin social life, illustrating an individual's success in achieving merit in this life and the next through worldly activities such as hosting feasts and bagging big game. Many Chin textiles also denote local subgroups and serve as emblems of community membership. The exhibition is organized around three themes: how textiles imply status within Chin culture, the migration of Chin weavers and the resulting effect on their textiles, and how, over time, the designs of Chin textiles have grown increasingly complex while the techniques for creating them have been simplified.

The Textile Museum is located at 2320 S Street, NW, a 10-minute walk from the Dupont Circle Metro station, Q Street exit. The cultural festival on Saturday, February 17 from 1-4 pm is free with no reservations required. Performances begin at 1:00 pm. For more info: (202) 667-0441 or www.textilemuseum.org

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Founded in 1925 by George Hewitt Myers, The Textile Museum is an international center for the exhibition, study, collection and preservation of the textile arts. The Museum explores the role that textiles play in the daily and ceremonial life of individuals the world over. Special attention is given to textiles of the Near East, Asia, Africa and the indigenous cultures of the Americas. The Museum also presents exhibitions of historical and contemporary quilts, and fiber art. With a collection of more than 17,000 textiles and rugs and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally. The Textile Museum is located at 2320 'S' Street, NW in Washington, DC. The Museum is open Monday - Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free; suggested donation is \$5.00. For further information, call 202-667-0441.

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