64TH ANNIVERSARY OF BURMA MARTYRS' DAY
19TH. JULY 2011
**EDITORIAL** : 64 TH. ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARTYRS’ DAY

Sayko July mamay naing (We can not forget 19 July). This is an idiom which was in the minds of all people of Burma. Arzarni day or Martyr’s Day is held on 19th July annually in Burma. It is held to mark the assassination of its founding father and independence leader along with his cabinet on this day in 1947 at 10:37 AM. This year marks the 64 th anniversary of this martyrs’ day. While working for the country Bogyoke Aung San and other leaders of Interim Cabinet members namely U Ba Win (Elder brother of Aung San), Mann Ba Khaing, Sayagyi U Razak, Mai Pun Saw-Bwar Gyi Sao San Tun, Dedoke U Ba Cho, Takhin Mya and Permanent Cabinet Secretary U Ohn Maung and body guard of U Razak, Ye Baw Ko Twe were brutally assassinated by a group of thugs and terrorists. As U Razzak and U Htwe were Muslims, the bloods of the Muslims were saturated for the independence of Burma.

They were gunned down by power-mad men and believers of the rule of might. It was an event that has not been forgotten to date. The people are still sorrowing, bleeding and weeping over similar events till this day is ironically perpetrate d by the Myanmar Tatmadaw, which is originally supposed to protect the people from all the dangers.

Usually top government officials, foreign diplomats, local dignitaries and families of the eight comrades assassinated along with Aung San laid wreaths in a solemn ceremony. But for last 9 years, Burma’s annual commemoration is downgraded to be attended by one minister and without his daughter, imprisoned opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. For the first time in nine years, Burma’s pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi attended an official ceremony for Martyrs’ Day.

The year 1945-47 saw the emergence of Aung San as a strong leader and an able statesman who had the confidence and love of the people. In January 1946, Aung San was elected President of the AFPFL. He formed the People’s Volunteer Organisation (PVO), as the military wing of the AFPFL, which made the British Government highly uneasy. He made it evident he would not refrain from violence should it be necessary for the freedom of Burma. The old Governor’s Council was dissolved, and in September 1946 Aung San was appointed Deputy Chairman of the new Executive Council with the portfolios of defense and external affairs. He warned the people not to imagine that his acceptance of office meant the end of all problems.

Aung San felt imperative and went straight into negotiations with ethnic minority groups within the country. The agreement reached with the British had left the future of the frontier areas to the decisions of its people. To settle the issue a conference was held at Panglong on 12 February 1947. Five national groups achieved autonomous states, out of them Shan and Kaya obtained secession right. The AFPFL laid down the independence policy at a convention in May.

Cont. P. 3
FROM P. 2  A committee was formed to draft the constitution of the independent Union of Burma. On 19th July at a meeting of the Executive Council, together with other six councillors, including his elder brother, U Ba Win, U Razak and his aide Ko Htwe (a Muslim), were assassinated by uniformed men who burst into the guarded conference chamber with machine guns.

The assassins escaped, but they were quickly trailed up to the home of Galon U Saw. Shortly before U Saw had joined the Burmese delegation to London, he had been shot at and wounded in the eye by men dressed in Khaki. There are those summerring that U Saw had believed Aung San’s PVO members were responsible for the shooting and therefore sought revenge. But the trial held that the instructions had been for the whole Executive Council to be destroyed, and it seemed that Galon U Saw had sought the death of Aung San and his colleagues in the odd belief that once they had been killed, he would become the head of the Burmese government. He was found guilty of abetment and sentenced to death.

Although Aung San was killed, the independence for which he had sacrificed his life came to his country. U Nu, the most senior member of the AFPFL, completed the final negotiations under the Nu-Atlee agreement. On 4th January 1948 the Independent Union of Burma was born. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi should copy her father to compel her opposition to come to the negotiated settlement. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD should follow the footsteps of General Aung San and the AFPFL to achieve the cherish goal of democracy, human right and rule of law in the country. ##

COVER STORY : 64TH. MARTYARS’ DAY

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NINE YEARS DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI ATTENDS MARTYRS’ CEREMONY  By M. A. ALAM

For the first time in nine years, Burma’s pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi attended an official ceremony for Martyrs’ Day, a national holiday in Burma that commemorates the assassination in 1947 of her father Gen Aung San and eight colleagues from the country’s independence movement. The new Government officials sent an invitation to Suu Kyi last week, and the Nobel Peace Prize laureate agreed to attend the ceremony. On 19 July 2011 Tuesday morning the government officials picked up Daw Suu Kyi at her home at 8:30 am and attended the 64th anniversary of martyrs’ day ceremony at Rangoon Martyrs’ Mausoleum.

Daw Suu Kyi revisited the Martyrs’ Mausoleum again on Tuesday afternoon alongside Central Executive Committee members of her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), as well as leading members of the Committee Representing the People’s Parliament and the NLD’s youth network.

Some 2,000 people led by Suu Kyi were reported to have joined the procession. The short march from the headquarters of NLD to the Martyrs’ Mausoleum was the biggest public demonstration since 2007, when the military junta launched a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters.  Cont. P. 4

Aung San Oo, left, the eldest son of Gen. Aung San and elder brother of Daw Suu Kyi, with his wife Lei Lei Nwe Thein, second right, walk to lay wreath at his father’s tomb and Burma’s democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, center, walks to offer flowers at her father’s tomb and eight other Martyr leaders at the Martyrs Mausoleum during a Martyr’s Day ceremony in Rangoon, Burma on Tuesday. July 19, 2011 (AP Photo/Khin Maung Win).
FROM P. 3 Suu Kyi and her youngest son, Htein Lin (aka Kim Aris), previously visited the Martyrs’ Mausoleum earlier this month to pay respect to her father and his fallen colleagues. Meanwhile nearly 200 youths in Rangoon marked the occasion by staging a march on Tuesday morning from Tamwe Township to the Martyrs’ Mausoleum in Banhan Township to pay tribute to those assassinated.

“The security forces are walking alongside us, because they want to ensure that the public do not join in,” said Naw Ohn Hla, a women activist who took part in the commemorative march.

“We are following in the steps of 88 Generation students’ leader Min Ko Naing,” said participant Tin Min Naing. “Ever since Min Ko Naing was arrested, we have paid tribute to the martyrs every year,” he said, adding that locals lined the road and cheered the marchers.

Martyrs Day commemorates the anniversary of the assassination of nine heroes of Burma’s independence movement—including Gen Aung San—on July 19, 1947, just six months before Burma regained its independence from Britain.

Aung San is considered the father of Burmese independence, and led the fight for colonial liberation from Britain, which had ruled Burma since 1885. Just six months before Burma achieved independence, he and eight colleagues were assassinated by political opponent U Saw and his group on July 19, 1947.

A separate photo taken of the Nobel laureate during the Martyrs’ Day ceremony in Rangoon was published on the marks front page of the Popular News Journal. It something of a change from the military-controlled government’s historic attempts to sideline Suu Kyi, whom it has keep under house arrest for more than 15 of the past 20 years.

Following her release in November last year, nine news journals were suspended for publishing photos of her on their front pages, although several others carried the images in supplements. Kyaw Yin Myint, a prominent Burmese writer, said that the appearance of Suu Kyi’s image on front pages was “delightful”, but to be considered noteworthy must be a permanent policy of the government. ##
JULY 21, 2011: Burmese opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party National League for Democracy (NLD) led more than 3,000 people on Tuesday 19 July 2011 to commemorate in the capital Yangon to mark the 64th anniversary of Martyr’s Day, the death of her father, a national independence hero, eye witnesses said.

The event, known as Martyr’s Day, is held every year to mark the assassination on July 19, 1947 of General Aung San and several other independence leaders. Aung San remains a hugely popular figure in Myanmar for his role in winning independence from Britain.

Gatherings of such large crowds in Myanmar are rare and usually prohibited, so this is being seen as a test of public freedom after the self-proclaimed civilian government took power after last year’s election, according to one local journalist who spoke to CNN and asked not to be named because of fears for his safety in the tightly controlled country.

November’s elections drew fire from critics who said the voting was aimed at creating the facade of democracy, rather than a truly open and democratic system as military leaders claimed.

The ruling military junta -- a totalitarian regime -- refused to allow international monitors to oversee the race and would not allow international journalists to cover the voting from inside the country. Meanwhile, one witness at the martyr’s day event, who asked for his name not to be disclosed because he fears for his safety, said the authorities monitored the events from a distance.

“I saw more than 10 trucks of armed police were on stand-by with full riot gear,” he said. “There were around 300 police.”

Agence France-Presse reported that plainclothes police took pictures of the crowds, but allowed hundreds to pass through checkpoints and continue to the memorial. Wearing a white blouse and a traditional black wrapped skirt, known as a longyi, it was the first time in nine years that Suu Kyi had attended the ceremony -- the pro-democracy leader had been under house arrest for most of the last 20 years.

Suu Kyi’s elder brother, U Aung San Oo, also laid a wreath at his father’s mausoleum, while a guard of honor paid tribute to the “Martyrs” by sounding their bugles, state-run newspaper, New Light of Myanmar, reported.

This year, sparked by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s presence, the National League for Democracy (NLD) and other pro democracy and ethnic rights organizations rallied over 3,000 people in a march towards the Martyrs’ Mausoleum, the largest public gathering in the country since the Saffron Revolution in 2007. The democracy leader visited the Martyrs’ Mausoleum twice; once in the regime organized ceremony, and the second as the leader of the public procession.

Ceremonies were held around the country by NLD branches in Shan, Kachin and Arakan States, and Mandalay, Magwe, Tenasserim, and Pegu Divisions. As laws restrict public gatherings of more than five people, this year’s large-scale public participation in the commemorations is a strong sign that the spirit of resistance.

Source: CNN ##
INTRODUCTION

Arakan is now a part of the Union of Burma (renamed Myanmar) but in the past she was independent. In ancient times, Arakan was divided into two kingdoms, south Arakan or Sandoway and north Arakan or Arakan proper. The two parts were united into one in the last part of the 13th century and this position of Arakan lasted till 1785 A.D. when the kingdom was merged with Burma (Myanmar).

The Rohingya problem has of late become a matter of great concern to the government and the people of Bangladesh. Several Lakh of uprooted Rohingyas, men, women and children, came out of their homeland Arakan and took shelter in Bangladesh. This happened not once but twice, in 1978-79 and 1991-92; the problem is not yet over; the reverse movement, i.e. the repatriation of the Rohingyas had started already, but is not yet complete. Such a big number of refugees have given rise to many problems in Bangladesh-problem of food, shelter, sanitation and law and order. This is a man-made problem, created by the government of Burma (now called Myanmar); their deliberate policy to denationalise the Rohingyas and their oppression over and suppression of the Rohingyas, compelled the latter to leave the country and take shelter across the river Naf in Bangladesh. Who are the Rohingyas and why is this problem?

There are about 18 lakh Rohingya Muslims in Arakan, a little less than half of the total population. By the new Citizenship Act of the ruling military junta in Myanmar, the Rohingya Muslims are denied of their rights, right to own property, and right of franchise. Even their basic human rights, i.e. right to live with dignity and honour has been taken away.

The Rohingyas have been facing inhuman torture, in so much as they had to leave their hearth and home leaving all their properties. But how could such a huge number of people suddenly enter into Arakan, so that the government of Burma (Myanmar) could claim that they are not nationals of Burma? In the following pages we have sought to examine these and such other questions, in our study, we have found that the Rohingyas have got a history, they are descendants of those who have been settling there in Arakan from a thousand years before. The Rohingyas have got a language, a culture and a heritage, above all the 18 lakh Rohingyas from a homogenous group. This is eyesore to the ruling junta of Myanmar and this is the reason why they have been trying to expel the Rohingyas, men, women and children. Ours is just a preliminary study; it is felt that more intensive investigations have to be undertaken to get a total picture of the whole issue.

The first Muslim settlers in Arakan were the Arabs; they were the ship-wrecked people coming to the east for purpose of trade. Now we will discussed the different phases of the entry of the Muslims into Arakan. In our study we have seen that initially the Muslims did not enter into Arakan in their own interest, rather they were invited by the rulers of Arakan. In fact one of the outset king of Arakan Naramikha (Min Sawmun) was restored to his throne by the Muslim armies of Bengal. He and his successors invited the Muslims to exploit their economic resources because their own people could not do it or did not know to do it. The economic development of Arakan has come to its present position due to the toil and labour of the Rohingyas. Even when Arakan was occupied by the king Bodawpaya of Burma, one third of the total population of Arakan were Muslims.

The Rohingya Muslins of Arakan played a glorious role in the establishment and consolidation of the great Arakanese Empire known as Maruk-U Empire. Unfortunately for us this part of history has been subjected to utter negligence. As a result, the glorious chapter of the history of the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan has uptill now remains unwritten.

The author of the following pages, Dr. Abdul Karim, is a great scholar and reputed historian of this Sub-Continent in his own right. The present work “THE ROHINGYAS: A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE” is the result of his strenuous research work dedicated to the cause of unearthing that glorious chapter of Rohingya national history. In this work of historic importance, he not only gave a complete account of the coming or growth of Muslims in Arakan along with its socio-political and cultural background but also the impact that it created on the subsequent history of the Rohingyas.
From P. 6

currency. But gold, silver, aloes are also found and a stuff called kambara (yak hair) whereof fly-flaps are found. The same country produces ... the rhinoceros, an animal which has on his forehead a single horn, and in this horn is a human figure.... We have eaten the flesh. He is found in other parts of Ind. but here the horn is more beautiful, often containing the image of a man, peacock, fish or anything else. The Chinese make girdles of this horn and pay high price among themselves, up to three or four thousand dinar and even more according to the figure's beauty. These horns are bought with cowries. (Sulayman, Year 851 .......).

There are some of the extracts from the writings of old Arab and Persian writers, all of whom mentions a place or kingdom which they called Rahma and which Harvey identifies with lower Burma. Other Arab geographers, al-Masudi, al-Idrisi also refer to the kingdom of Rahma and historians of early Bengal have much speculated about the identity Rahma with the kingdom of Dharmapala of the Pala dynasty in Bengal or in other words they identify Rahma with Bengal. 2

In the golden age of the trading activities of the Arabs, their merchant-vessels used to ply all over the sea-coast from the Red Sea to the Chinese coast, and this golden age of the Arabs continued at least up to the 17th century. With the coming of the Europeans with their superior vessels and huge capital, the Arabs began to lose hold on their eastern trade. It develop upon the geographers and scholars to do researches on all matters connected with trade and commerce, the location and nature of the sea-ports, availability of commodities, their places of origin, price and facts of other nature. In later time, i.e.

during the hey-day of European trade with East Indies, European scholars and traders also did the same kind of research for the benefit of their traders.

These Arab Geographers refer to various trade centres on the cost of the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, although unfortunately most of these places cannot be identified at present with the knowledge at our disposal. The modern scholars have tried to identify two places—Samandar and Ruhmi. The first is identified with Chittagong 3 and the second is identified with both Bengal and Lower Burma as we have seen above. Whether or not, the kingdom of Rahma is to be identified with Bengal or Lower Burma, these accounts of the Arab geographers leave no doubt that the Arabs were acquainted with and the Arab traders frequented the ports of Bengal, Arakan, Burma and other coastal kingdoms.

If the Arabs visited the Chittagong port, they were also acquainted with Arakan and came into contact with the Arakanese kings. So the identification of Rahma is immaterial for the purpose of our present study, there is no doubt that the Arabs had contact with Arakan during the 8th to 10th centuries of the Christian era. A part from the general statements of the Arab geographers, there is positive local evidence of the early Arab contact with Arakan. In the Arakanese traditional history, it is stated that in the reign of Mahatoing Tsandaya (788-810 A.D) several Arab ships wrecked off the coast of Rambl Island (Ramree), the Muslim sailors somehow escaped and swam into the shore. In the Arakanese history they are called kulas or foreigners. When they were taken and produced before the king, the latter allotted a piece of land for them and they were allowed to settle there. 4

This is the first evidence of the Muslim settlement in Arakan. R.B. Smart writes in the British Burma Gazetteer as follows: 5 “The local histories relate that in the ninth century several ships were wrecked on Ramree Island and the Mussalman crews sent to Arakan and placed in villages there. They differ but little from the Arakanese except in their religion and in the social customs which their religion directs, in the writing they use Burmese, but amongst themselves employ colloquially the language of their ancestors.”

This is a very important piece of evidence regarding the origin of the Rohingyas. These shipwrecked Arab Muslims became the nucleus of the Muslim population of Arakan; later other Muslims from Arabia, Persia and other countries entered into Arakan. The important point to be noticed about these shipwrecked Muslims is that they have stuck to their

RELIGION. i.e. Islam and Islamic social customs. Though they used Burmese language and also adopted other local customs, they have retained the language of their ancestors (probably with mixture of local words) in dealing among themselves. Another point to be noted is that the Arab shipwrecked Muslims have retained their religion, language and social customs for more than a thousand years. Later on, of course other Arabs also come in the trading and other pursuits and some of them have stayed on in Arakan and in this way people of Arab blood increased as time passed by. So the Rohingyas have been staying in Arakan for more than a thousand years.

SECOND PHASE OF THE COMING OF THE MUSLIMS

The fifteenth century is a great turning point in the history of Arakan; during this time a large contingent of Muslim entered into Arakan from Bengal and they went there by invitation of the ruling prince. The cause was political. In the beginning of the 15th century, the Arakanese king Min-Saw-Mun attacked some area of Burma, but was defeated. The Burmese king retaliated by attacking and taking possession of Laung-gyat, the capital and the king was expelled from his kingdom. The story is given below in the words of A.P Phayre:

“The war between the Burmese monarch, Meng-lishew (Minkong) and the Arakanese king Min Saw Mun resulted in the latter’s defeat and expulsion from his kingdom in the local era 768 (=1406 A.D). Min Saw Mun fled to Bengal, the governor of Chittagong took from him his queen, Tsan-mwe-sheng, on which the fugitive king went to Thura-tan where the king received him with distinction, ....... For several years the Talaings (a hilly tribe who were fighting for the Arakanese) and the Burmans struggled for the possession of Arakan, and the letter were finally expelled in the year 788 (i.e. 1426 A.D) by the efforts of the Arakanese and Talaings.

“During this period, the dethroned king was residing at the king of Thu-ra-tan, who being engaged in war could not afford him any assistance, while there the Delhi king came to attack Thu-ra-tan, with a huge army consisting of elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers, also dogs are large as bullocks, trained to war. By the advise of Min-Saw-Mun, the dog were disabled by means of iron-hooks baited with raw flesh, seizing which they were caught by the mouth and easily overpowered. The elephants and horses fell into pits dug for them, and covered over with straw and earth, at the bottom of which were iron spikes; thus the Thu-ra-tan king obtained a complete victory. The Arakanese exiled king taught the king’s subjects...”

On P. 8 continued...
From P. 7 the art of entrapping a herd of wild elephants by driving them into a space enclosed by a stockade and ditch; he also instructed them in the art of training elephants.

"Out of gratitude for these services, the king determined to assist the exiled prince in the recovery of his kingdom. He appointed a general called in the Arakanese U-lu-Kheng (Wali Khan) to command the army of restoration. This person however betrayed his trust, and joining with a Rakhine Chief, named Tse-ku-Ka, they established a government and imprisoned Min-Saw-Mun. He escaped and again fled to Bengal.7 “The king of Thu-ra-tan now appointed two nobles; named Dan-ba-tsu and Ban-ba-tsu, to carry out his intentions together with a large army under the command of Tshat-ya-Khat (Sandi Khan). They arrived with orders to place Min-Saw-Mun on the throne and bring back the head skin of U-lu-Kheng. The expedition was successful. U-lu-Kheng suffered the fate his crime deserved and the historian records in glowing terms the joy of the people, from the inhabitants of the kingly city to those of the smallest village in the empire that the descendant of their ancient line of kings was restored to them. “The restored king, however, was forced to submit to the degradation of being tributary to the king of Thu-ra-tan, from his time the coins of the Arakan kings bore on the reverse, their names and titles in Persian Charsurer.7 This event had far reaching effects on the history of Arakan and spread of Muslim influence there. The Arakanese king Min-Saw-Mun passed his exiled life in Bengal for a quarter of a century and he must have been accompanied by his family and retinue. During this twenty-five years the Arakanese people came in contact with the local people and became conversant with local language and local customs and culture.

In the above quotation Phayre states that the Arakanese king taught the Bengali army as to how to face foreign invasion, and deal with invading elephants, horses and dogs. Similarly, the Arakanese who accompanied the king must have also learnt many things from Bengali Muslim hosts.

When the Arakanese king Min-Saw-Mun took shelter in Bengal in 1406 AD. Sultan Ghiasuddin Azam Shah was on the throne, but he was restored by Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah in 1430 AD. During the interval, Bengal witnessed several palace intrigues, several kings were killed by kingmakers and several occupied the throne through their blessings. Thus the family of Ghas-ud-din Azam Shah was exterminated and a line of kings under their slave Shihab-ud-din Bayazid Shah occupied the throne, the latters were also removed, and Hindu king Raja Ganesh occupied the throne. A prince of his family Jadu became a Muslim and occupied the throne under the title of Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Shah. This man restored the Arakanese king to his throne. So the king Min-Saw-Mun and his family and retinue experienced all these events and happenings in the Bengal Court. The changes did not take place easily as we have stated in a few sentences. There were movements and counter movements, fightings, killings, political groupings and regroupings, at one stage the guardian saint of Pandua, Shaikh Nur Quft Alam interfered and invited Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi of Jaunpur to intervene and save the Muslim kingdom. The Sharqi Sultan came and invaded with a large army, but had to return when by tricks, Raja Ganesh got his son Jadu converted to Islam and feigned to relinquish the Kingship to his converted son. The Arakanese king returned to his kingdom with all these experiences. Arakan had no proper coinage, they became now acquainted with minted coins; Arakan used Burmese script, literature was not developed, but in Bengal they found Bengali, Arabic and Persian languages and literature. So the Arakanese returned to their country with much commitment to a civilised life and a better living.

The next important point to be noted is the arrival of large Muslim population in Arakan. In those days Arakan’s fighting force was predominantly navy and elephant corps, but Bengal was weak in both, Bengal was strong in army, or land force. And, in fact, not one but two expeditions were sent to Arakan by the Bengal king. The first expedition was sent under Wali Khan who proved a traitor, but the second expeditions succeeded in seating Min-Saw-Mun to his throne. In both the expeditions, many people belonging to the auxiliary forces, like carriers, tent bearers, cooks and butlers, washer-men etc. accompanied the actual fighting force, or in other words combattant and non-combattant people taken together, several thousand Muslims entered into Arakan in 1430 AD, while reinstating the ousted king Min-Saw-Mun. It is almost certain that the first expeditionary force did not return to Bengal because they rebelled and they knew what could be their fate if they returned to Bengal. So it is very probable that they remained in Arakan, and settled in villages and out of the way places. It is also doubtful if all soldiers of the second expeditionary force returned home, because their services were needed by the reinstated king. So these soldiers also helped in swelling the Muslim population as found in later times.

In the previous pages it has been stated that the king of one country was reinstated in his kingdom by that of another, but the enterprise was not so easy. It involved not two but three kingdoms, Bengal, Arakan and Burma. So it may reasonably be assumed that much diplomatic exercises preceded the actual restoration of the Arakanese king, and actually it took long twenty-five years to accomplish the task. The Bengali king did not certainly undertake such hazardous and expensive enterprise for no ultimate gain for himself. It is not possible to say for want of positive evidence what was the agreement arrived at between the two parties, thought it may be reasonably surmised that the king of Arakan bound himself to be loyal to his benefactor, the king of Bengal. Events and facts prove that the Arakanese king not only bound himself to bear the cost of the expedition but also to pay tribute to the king of Bengal.

M.A Tahir Ba Tha in his Short History of Rohinggas and Kamans of Burma (translated by A.F.K Jilani, edited by Mohd. Ashraf Alam) says, “Narameikhla agreed to the following conditions:- 1) To return the twelve towns of Bengal. 2) The kings of Arakan must use Muslim titles. 3) The court emblem must be inscribed with Kalima Tayuba in Persian. 4) The coins, medallions must be inscribed with Persian as court language of Arakan. 5) To use the coins, medallions must be inscribed with Kalima Tayuba in Persian and to mint them in Bengal. 5) To use the Persian as court language of Arakan. 6) To pay taxes and presents annually.

The terms of agreement must have been favourable to the Bengali king. When the king Min Saw-Mun reached the capital, he was widely acclaimed by his people. The first thing he did was to transfer the capital from Launggyet to Mrauk-U, which in the hands of Bengali poets and people became Roshango (Rohang). Min Saw-Mun probably received the idea of transferring the capital from his benefactor, the Bengal Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah. The Bengal Sultan transferred the capital
From Pandua to Guar 8
because the former place saw many killings, including the killing of several kings as a result of the palace intrigues. The boy king Jalal Uddin did not like to reign from that cursed city. For Min Saw-Mun also the city of Launggyet was a cursed city from where he was ousted and which city also saw the rise and fall of many kings, Harvey writes: 9, “The turmoil of foreign inroads showed that Launggyet was ill-fated and the omen indicated Mrohaung as a lucky site, so he decided to move there; though the astrologers said that if he moved the capital he would die within a year, he insisted, saying that the move would benefit the people and his own death would matter little. In 1433 he founded Mrohaung and in the next year he died. A populous sea-port, built on hillocks amid the rice-plains, and intersected by canals which served as streets, Mrohaung remained the capital for the next four centuries.” The Muslims who went to Arakan from Bengal built the Sandi Khan mosque at Mrohaung and thus the Muslims settled at the capital city in large number. In fact those were the people who followed the king to reinstate him there. Seated on the throne, the king had to pay attention to the payment of cost of the expedition and pay the tribute as stipulated.

The payment must have continued for several years. This payment, however, posed a problem, because Arakan had no regular coinage, unstamped silver pieces of various sizes were used in their transaction. But in Bengal, they used minted and stamped coins of superior dies and exquisite finishing. The Bengal coins were of standard size, weight and shape bearing inscriptions in Arabic characters giving the names and pedigree of kings, dates of issue and the name of mint. So if the Arakanese had to provide and they did so, in the coins of the same fashion. For this reason, they had to provide for minting coins in the Bengal fashion, i.e. with standard weight, size and shape. It is in this connection that the Arakanese king had to invite experts, mint masters, die staff, and artisans for minting the coins. The Arakanese coins that they produced reveal much more information than only the minting of coins. Their coins bore the name of the king and date, but the most important point to be noted is that though the kings were all Buddhists, they took a Muslim name along with their Buddhist name, the Muslim names were written in Arabic characters, sometimes both in Arabic and Bengali characters. This suggests that Arabic and Bengali calligraphers were also appointed along with mint experts.

Min Saw-Mun bound himself to pay the tribute to Bengal, but he died in 1434 A.D. Sultan Jalal Uddin Muhammad Shah of Bengal had also died in the meantime, he died in 1432 A.D. So it is doubtful whether the pact or agreement reached between the two monarchs remained valid. As there is no written record, nothing definite can be said, but facts show that the practice of adopting a Muslim name by the Arakanese kings continued for more than two hundred years. The Arakanese kings who are known to have taken Muslim names are as follows: Col. A.P. Phayre who first discovered some of those coins and studied them says: 10 “The restored king (Meng Yoan Mwyn - Min Saw-Mun), however was forced to submit to the degradation of being tributary to the king of Thuratan (Bengal) and from this time the coins of the Arakan kings bore on the reverse their names and titles in the Persian character. This custom was probably first made obligatory upon them as vassals, but they afterwards continued it when they had recovered their independence and ruled the country as far as the Brahmaputra river.”

The Arakanese kings used to take the title “Dhavala Gajeshwara” (Lord of the Red elephant) and they inscribed this title in their coins. 11 As stated above Min Saw-Mun made the pact with the Bengal Sultan to pay for the cost of the expedition and to pay tribute, but how long the Arakanese kings were obliged to honour the pact made by Min Saw-Mun with Sultan Jalaluddin is not known.

Both Arakan and Bengal fought between themselves on the possession of Chittagong in the Husain Shahi period (1493-1538) and Afghan period (1538-1576). Those kings of Arakan who fought against the Sultans of Bengal also adopted Muslim names and inscribed these names in their coins. To cite a few examples two Arakanese kings Minyaazagi (Salim Shah-I 1593-1612) and Min Khamaua (Hussain Shah 1612-1622) were contemporaries of Jahangir, both invaded Bengal several times, but they also adopted Muslim names, Thiri Thudama (Salim Shah-II 1622-1638) was a contemporary of both Jahangir and Shah Jahan; he invaded Bengal in the later part of the reign of Jahangir, and actually looted the city of Dhaka, but he also adopted a Muslim name. Why then the Arakanese kings adopted Muslims names? There is no proof that any of them accepted Islam, they remained Buddhists although. Min Saw-Mun and a few of his successors were tributary, but later kings ruled and maintained their sovereignty without any let or hindrance. That is why, the question is why did they inscribe Muslim names in their coins.

With the restoration of Min Saw-Mun to his throne, a big contingent of Muslims entered into Arakan. The contingent included the army, not one army but two, of which the members of the first expeditionary force spread over the country and mixed with the people. The second army also must have been a big one, because they had to fight against both Arakanese and the first contingent of Bengal army. Next, the contingent included the administrators, officers and intellectual persons. Though we have no knowledge about the administration in Arakan in the 15th – 16th century, we find that not only soldiers and members of the subordinate staff but also the ministers
From P. 9 and judges came from the Muslim community. The seventeenth century Bengali Muslim poets give in their writings an impression that the capital city of Roshang (Mrohaung or Mrauk-U) thronged with the Muslim population, so that the Muslim ministers maintained courts, i.e. religious, social and cultural assemblies of their own. Then in the third category came the Muslim artisan and craftsmen, the officers and men connected with the mint and other state establishments. Last but not the least came the traders and businessmen in the hitherto terra incognita abounding in agricultural and natural resources. Later, in the essay, we shall give an idea of the Muslims who entered into Arakan in large number. We shall also see that when the king of Arakan picked up quarrel with Shah Shuja, the former did not take action against the latter openly for fear of estranging his relations with the Muslim subjects. So it is possible that initially the Arakanese king accepted Muslim name and inscribed legend in coins in Arabic just to satisfy his overlord, the Bengal king, but later the practice continued. The kings found it expedient to continue the practice to keep his Muslim subjects in good humour.

We have seen above that the Muslims entered into Arakan in a body twice; first the shipwrecked Arabs and second with the restoration of Min Saw-Mun. Both the Arabs trade with the east continued up to the 16th centuries the Arabs traders visited the Arakanese ports quite often, may be once a year during trading season. Some traders must have remained there either voluntarily or out of necessity. In this way the Arab Muslims became familiar with the land of Arakan. But with the restoration of Min Saw-Mun, a large number of Muslims entered into Arakan and taken together, the Muslims in Arakan became a force in the body-politic of Arakan.

This raiding was pronounced by the Provincial Council at Goa to be just, since the Mogors (Maghuls) were not only invaders and tyrannical usurpers but also enemies of Christianity. They usually made there general attacks three or four times in the year, irrespective of minor raids which went on most of the year, so that during the five years I spent in the kingdom of Arracan, some eighteen thousand people came to the ports of Dianga and Angarcule.

Of these eighteen-thousand captives Manrique and other Portuguese priests baptised eleven thousand four hundred seven. Before Manrique, his predecessor priests baptised sixteen thousand ninety captives from Bengal. Manrique gives other examples of carrying away of captives from Bengal by the pirates. Manrique and other priests welcomed the piratical activities, because the better for them to baptise them. The Maghs also joined the Portuguese in piracy and they jointly carried on piratical attacks to the coastal districts of Bengal. Shihab-ud-din Talish, the famous 17th century historian gives a horrible picture as to how the Magh and Portuguese pirates carried away people from Bengal, oppressed them and sold them as slaves. He says: 18

As these (piratical) raids continued for along time, Bengal became day by day more desolated. Not a house was left inhabited on either side of the river lying on the pirates’ track from Chatgaon to Dacca. The prosperous district of Bakla (Bakergung) was swept clean with the broom of plunder and kidnapping, so that none was left to occupy any house or kindle a light in that region.

“When they came from Chatgaon to ravage Bengal they skirted the imperial frontier post of Bhulua (Noakhali) on their right and the island of Sondip on their left, and reached the village of Sangramarh at the southern apex of the Delta of Dacca (some 30 miles from Dacca) and then point of junction of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. From this place they sailed up the Ganges if they wished to plunder Jes sore, Hugli and Bhushna, or up the Brahma pura if Vikrampur, Sonargaon and Dacca were their objectives.

The Arakan pirates both Magh and Feringi used constantly to plunder Bengal. They carried off the Hindus and Muslims they could seize, pierced the palms of their hands passed thin strips of cane through the holes, and threw the men huddled together under the decks of their ships. Every morning they flung down some uncooked rice to the captives from above as people fling grain to fowl. They sold their captives to the

Cont. P. 11
Dutch, English, and French merchant at the ports of the Deccan. Sometimes they bought their captives to Tamulk and Balasore for sale at high prices. Only the Feringis sold their prisoners. But the Maghs generally did not sell their captives, they employed them in Arakan in low works particularly agriculture, cutting of wood, feeding the animals and felling the trees etc. Their number was not small and an idea of their member may be had from the fact that when the Chittagong fort fell into the hands of the Mughals, ten thousand Bengali (both Muslim and Hindu) captives got liberty and they went to their homes. Actually they were not slaves but free men; they were made to slavery.

FOURTH PHASE OF THE COMING OF THE MUSLIMS

The next large influx of Muslims from Bengal into Arakan took place in the middle of the 17th century. This was due to political upheaval in India, in the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (1627-1658) had four sons, Dara Shikoh, Shuja, Aurangzib and Murad. The Mughal princes were trained in the art of government. Shah Jahan could guess that his four able sons would eventually fight amongst themselves to occupy the throne after his death. So he tried to keep them separate giving each of them a share of governing the country. Dara Shikoh, the eldest was kept in the capital by his side, he was more refined, philosophic but less able in the art of governing. Shah Shuja, the second son was given the viceroyalty of Bengal and Orissa, he was able but a little devoted to pleasure. Aurangzib, the third son, was as learned as he was appointed viceroy of the Deccan province. Murad, the fourth son was the viceroy of Gujarat, but he was less experienced and more indolent. It is happened that Shah Jahan actually fell ill in 1658 and for some time, they took it for certain information of the emperor's health living in the provinces did not receive consoling. When the princes entered into Arakan during this time.

The great Bengali poet Alaol, for example writes as follows: Alaol says that people from various countries and belonging to various groups came to Arakan to be under the care of Arakanese king. He mentioned the people from Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Abyssinia, Rumi (actually by Rumi, he mentioned Turkish), Khurasan, Uzbekistan, Lahore, Multan, Sind, Kashmir, the Deccan, Hind (north Indian), Kamrup and Bengal, Karna, Malayese, Achin, Cochin and Karnataka country. The poet also refers to the Shaikhs, Sayyids, Mughal, Pathan, Rajputs, Hindus, and people of Ava, Burma, Shyam (Indo-China), Tripura, kukis (of Assam and Tippera); the Armenians, the Dutch, the Danish, the English, the French and the Spanish and the Portuguese were also found in the capital city of Mraukhoang. Alaol's evidence gets support from European writers. For example, Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, a 17th century European traveller says that the Arakanese army comprised of various nationalities and countries as mentioned above.

In conclusion, the Muslims entered into Arakan in a big way on four different occasions; the Arabs in course of their trading activities including the shipwrecked ones; the Muslim army, actually two big contingents, in course of restoring the king Min Saw-Mun to the Arakanese throne; the captive Muslims carried by the pirates in the 16th-17th centuries; and the family and retinue of Shah Shuja in 1660. Of them, the army contingents who entered into Arakan with the restored king Min Saw-Mun to the Arakanese capital Mrohaung and Muslim influence there could be seen in a great measure. They occupied the government offices, occupied the posts of ministers, judges and other subordinate posts. According to Muslim Poets and writers of Arakan, it is gratifying to note that at least three Prime ministers, three defence ministers and two ministers were Muslims in Arakan Royal Court during Mrauk-U Empire of Arakan.
Over two million Burmese refugees get safe-haven in Thailand, the land of smile, with the exception of Rohingya boat people. About 80 or more are still in Thai jails. Two lakh fifty thousand Rohingya refugees are in Bangladesh. Only 28,000 are registered and fed by UNHCR. The rest are vulnerable to arrest, push back etc and many have to go to beds at night fighting hunger pains. Some came to Bangladesh to get married as there is no freedom of marriage in north Arakan for Rohingyas as they can not afford money to bribe for the permission to get married. After marriage they have child. But can not effort living due to the work restriction for Rohingyas. Some went to Malaysia by fishing boat and died on the way. As the husband never return, the wife was compelled to sell the child. Sometime the new born fell prey to push back and died on the way. Some fell prey to rape.

About two hundred local villagers armed with swords, rods, brickbats and mattocks attacked the unguarded, unprotected and undocumented refugee camps around 10 a.m. on 16th July 2011. With cry and hue the frightened refugees ran into the official refugee camps, the attackers followed them and also attacked the registered Rohingya refugees inside the camps and taken their belongings. The attackers forgot the fact that they once took refuge at Maungdaw, Arakan during the time of liberation war in 1971.

In the raid of the villagers, 20 years old Rahmat Ullah, 60 years old Nobi Hussain and 53 years old Abdul Hamid, who are unregistered refugees, 22 years old Mohammed Musa from block G, and Mustafa Kamal from block-F, both of whom are registered are now hospitalized.

It is reported that more refugees would suffer from the attack, as the villagers had also destroyed many sheds in the unofficial camps. It is also alleged that local police were behind the attackers. The locals have often beat or attacked refugees outside the camps, but never as serious as the most recent intrusion into the camps. (Narinjara News).

A UNHCR report says the presence of some 28,700 refugees residing in the two camps of Kutupalong and Nayapara, in the southeastern district of Cox’s Bazar, constitutes one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world.

After visiting the refugees camps the Bureau of Population, Refugees and...
Travel Restrictions for Muslims Loosened in Southern Arakan State  By NAW NOREEN

FRIDAY, 29 July 2011, DVB NEWS

Muslims in five principal townships of Southern Arakan State (SRS) in western Burma have been granted permission by the immigration department to travel freely, providing they carry ID cards.

The decision comes nine months after the elections last year and campaign pledges by the eventual winner, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), that it would increase mobility for Burma’s long-persecuted Muslim minority.

A man in Arakan state’s Sandoway said that the decision may be related to letter sent to the government by residents of the town in which they complained that the civil rights ascribed in the 2008 constitution, which was adopted when the new government came to power in March, were not being recognised.

Until recently Muslims in Arakan state were required to get permission from their local authorities before travelling outside of designated regions, regardless of whether they had National ID or an alien residency permit.

But in April this year, authorities stopped granting permission, meaning that large communities were banned from moving around outside of their townships.

“We are happy about this,” the Sandoway man said of the latest development. “We have been struggling with health, money, social and education issues for about 20 years.

We are happy that the government, who now sympathises with our woes, is recognising us as Burmese civilians and protecting our rights. It is important for us to be responsible and good citizens so we won’t lose these rights again.”

Muslims have long been persecuted by the Buddhist government in Burma; the ethnic Rohingya minority in particular is denied any sort of legal status and hundreds of thousands have fled to Bangladesh.

The government claims that four percent of Burmese are practising Muslims, but the US state department, which has labelled Burma one of the world’s most religiously intolerant states, claims the figure could be considerably higher.

“Following a report in early 2010 by UN Special Rapporteur to Burma Tomas Ojea Quintana that claimed the Burmese government had been persecuting Muslims, the then-ruling junta began issuing identity cards to the Rohingya.

Various rights groups have warned that the Burmese government is attempting to rid the country of Muslims by making their lives in Burma unbearable; up to 400,000 Rohingya are living as refugees in Bangladesh, which has also been reluctant to grant them any sort of registration.

ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMP WASHED OUT

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 2011, DVB NEWS

Days of heavy rain in eastern Bangladesh have sparked panic in the unofficial Kutupalong camp that houses tens of thousands of refugees from Burma, with flimsy huts destroyed and food shortages worsening.

A Kutupalong camp committee member told the Bangladesh-based Kaladan Press Network yesterday that several huts had been washed out, while many others had lost roofs.

Concerns have also mounted about the ability of the refugees in the camp, none of whom are recognised by the UN’s refugee agency and thus receive no UN assistance, to provide food for themselves, with their normal means of making money scuppered by the extreme weather conditions.

Kutupalong houses thousands of refugees from the Rohingya minority, which have fled their native Arakan state in western Burma following systematic persecution by the Burmese government, which refuses to grant them citizenship rights.

Estimates of the total number of Rohingya in Bangladesh range from 200,000 to 400,000 – wary of creating a pull-factor for more refugees, the Bangladeshi government has allowed only 28,000 to be registered by the UN.

In June, Bangladesh’s food minister, Abdur Razzaque, warned Western nations against pressuring Dhaka to register the remaining Rohingya, the vast majority of whom have sought refuge in Cox’s Bazar, where as in the rest of Bangladesh, overcrowding and scarcity of resources are serious problems.

Physicians for Human Rights estimate that the acute malnutrition rate for children in Kutupalong, one of the main unofficial Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar, is 18.2 percent. This is defined by being 60 percent or less of the median average weight for the age group, which the World Health Organisation suggests will result in a 30 to 50 percent mortality rate amongst the inflicted.

The Holland chapter of Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) provides medical assistance to the Kutupalong camp, but complaints continually surface that aid is in short supply.

As well as the infrastructural problems that rainy season brings, the wet weather conditions also fuel illnesses such pneumonia and malaria.

Muslim women in Arakan state’s Sittwe hold ID cards while they wait to cast ballots during last year’s elections (Reuters)

A Rohingya refugee repairing his mud walled hut which was washed out by heavy rain and flood at Kutupalong.
MASTER MASIUDDIN AHMED
EXPIRED

Master Masiuuddin Ahmed expired at Chittagong Metropolitan Hospital (Innahe- lillahi wainnaelahi Rajewon!) on 15th July 2011 and he was buried at Chandgoan R/A graveyard, Chittagong after Juma Prayer.

Late Masiuuddin Ahmed S/O Late Molvi Nazir Ahmed was born in Habipara, Maungdaw Township on February 20, 1918. He passed his matriculation with distinctions in literature from February 20, 1918. He worked as a school teacher at Maungdaw High School. Then he left the school to run his own business. In 1946-47 he had accompanied Mr. Omrah Meah, the President of Peace Committee, North Arakan, and met with Mr. Hussain Shaheed Shurawady, the Chief Minister of undivided Bengal, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Prime Minister designate of Pakistan and Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah Governor General of Pakistan. They discussed the future political course of the North Arakan. Their meeting with Mr. Jinnah made Gen Aung San to see Mr. Jinnah while he was going to London and promised to ensure the rights and freedom of the Muslim of Arakan.

He left five sons, four daughters, many grand children and great grand children, relatives, friends and many near and dear ones. His sons Mr. Jawaduddin, Professor Dr. Wakruddin and Rezauddin and his son-in-law AFK Jilani (Ishrat Fatima) are well-known in Arakan. We pray for his departed soul and salvation. ##

MALAYSIA SIGNED THE ARRANGE- MENT ON TRANSFER AND RESETTEL- MENT AGREEMENT WITH AUSTRALIA

JULY 28, 2011, BANGKOK: The “Arrangement on Transfer and Resettlement” was signed in Kuala Lumpur on July 25 by Malaysia’s Home Affairs Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and Australia’s Immigration and Citizenship Minister Chris Bowen. It will transfer 4,000 refugees in Malaysia to Australia over the next four years, in return for Malaysia taking in 800 asylum-seekers arriving in Australia or interdicted at sea en route to Australia after July 25. Australia will pay for the deal, predicted to cost around US $325million over the current four-year implementation timetable, with Australia already saying the deal could be expanded.

As Burmese nationals make up an estimated 80-90 percent of refugees in Malaysia, the deal offers some hope to the small additional percentage that will benefit from the arrangement over the coming four years. However, there are mixed feelings about the deal. Latheefa Koya, an adviser to Lawyers for Liberty, a Malaysian NGO, told The Irrawaddy that “the thousands of refugees, mostly Burmese, who have yet to be registered with the UN Refugee Agency cannot benefit.”

Of particular concern are Burmese Rohingya fleeing persecution in western Burma, where they are denied citizenship. Although they can register as refugees in Malaysia, “This deal is unlikely to benefit the Rohingyas in Malaysia as they don’t fit the profile of those who are likely to be accepted by Australia. Many have been here for 10-20 years,” said Latheefa Koya.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Malaysia, there are some 94,400 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with the organization. Of these “86,500 are from Myanmar [Burma], comprising some 35,600 Chins, 21,400 Rohingyas, 10,100 Myanmar Muslims, 3,800 Mon, 3,400 Kachins and other ethnicities from Myanmar.”

UNCHR says that there are around 10,000 unregistered asylum-seekers or refugees in Malaysia, though some NGOs believe there are tens of thousands of un-
By Canadian Friends of Burma, Thursday, July 28, 2011

Ottawa: Canadian Ambassador to Burma, Ron Hoffmann, presented two honorary doctorate law degrees to the Burmese democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on behalf of two universities in Canada – shortly before a meeting with Burma's new President Thein Sein taking place in Naypyidaw. The two accolades delivered by the ambassador two weeks ago in Rangoon are from Carleton University of Ottawa and Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Carleton University awarded Burmese democracy leader an honorary doctorate law in recognition of her “distinguished contribution to people throughout the world who are striving to attain democracy, human rights and ethnic conciliation by peaceful means.” A ceremony was held at the university on Feb. 22, 2011. Suu Kyi sent a video message to the ceremony.

Memorial University of Newfoundland conferred Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with its doctorate law degree in 2004, so were University of Toronto in 1993 and Queen's University in 1995. ##

ROHINGYAS WELCOME OIC RESOLUTION ON BURMESE MUSLIMS

By IINA

CHITTAGONG (Bangladesh), Shaaban 23/July 24, 2011 (IINA): Rohingyaas inside Burma and abroad welcome the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s (OIC) resolution number 4/38-MM “On the situation of the Muslim community in Burma” from the 38th Session of Council Foreign Ministers which was held from June 28-30, 2011, in the Astana Republic of Kazakhstan, according to a politician from inside Arakan who declined to be named.

The OIC adopted the following resolutions regarding the situation of the Muslim community in Burma: Calls on Member States to extend all possible forms of support and assistance to Burmese Muslims, and particularly to those among them living as refugees outside their homeland; Calls upon on the government of Burma to put an end to operations of displacement, expulsion, and exile of Rohingya Muslims, and to the continued attempt to eradicate their Islamic Culture and identity, and urges government authorities to respect the text on international legitimacy of human rights; Expresses deep concern over the continued monumental violations of the rights of Rohingya Muslims in the Arakan region of Burma, and requests the Secretary General to continue his efforts to end these practices in coordination with the international community together with international and regional organizations, and continue those efforts in the context of dialogue, reconciliation and coordination among Islamic organizations in Burma.

The Rohingya community is pleased by the news, and would like to give heartfelt thanks to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation members of the Council Foreign Ministers for these significant resolutions on Burmese Muslims, particularly highlighting Rohingya ethnic issues, said a Rohingya leader on condition of anonymity.

The OIC Secretary General, H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, gave a remarkable speech about Rohingya to the 38th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, as ‘the plight of Muslims in Myanmar figures high on our Muslim minorities agenda’. Indeed, a convention was held at the OIC General Secretariat last May with the participation of senior leaders representing many Rohingya Associations. The convention reached a consensual and milestone agreement to set up the Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU), which pools together 25 associations that will collaboratively seek a political solution to the problems faced by the Rohingya people.

At present, the Rohingya community is faced with many kinds of persecution by the authorities of the present government, such as arbitrary arrest and torture, and extortion of money which puts the Rohingya community in extreme poverty, said an ex-village chairman from Buthidaung Township who prefers not to be named. Source: AH/IINA ##

Burma Democracy Leader Urges Talks to End Ethnic Conflicts

VOA News July 28, 2011

Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has issued what she calls an "earnest appeal" for the government and ethnic groups to begin immediate peace talks.

In an open letter made available to VOA's Burma service Thursday, Aung San Suu Kyi also says she is prepared to assist the peace process to the best of her ability.

The letter is addressed to President Thein Sein and organizations representing the Kachin, Karen, Mon and Shan ethnic minorities. Government forces have been waging a military offensive against strongholds of the ethnic armies for the last several weeks.

Aung San Suu Kyi says in her letter that ethnic harmony is of "utmost importance" to Burma, and that all sides will suffer if force is used to settle the conflicts. She says that only when peace is achieved on the basis of mutual understanding and respect can the country successfully strive for development. ##
HUMANITY GONE AMUCK IN ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS

By Our Correspondent

July 16, 2011, Chittagong, Bangladesh:

News of inhumanity against the Rohingya refugees in southern Bangladesh is being daily reported echoing for redress to the sufferings of one of the world's most persecuted, forgotten, and underrepresented peoples — Rohingya.

For decades, the Rohingya refugees have been taking refuge in Bangladesh, under extreme situation, for reason of geographical immediacy. In addition, the refugees, as they often make public, took shelter in southern Bangladesh because of the traditional relationship in the bonds of Islamic fraternity, culture and temperament.

Conversely, to the grief of the Rohingya people, the Rohingya refugees, particularly those who are unregistered, are passing their lives in a state of jeopardy. A few local people with vested interest are constantly fuelling the flame of anti-Rohingya sentiment resulting in their loss of lives, destruction of their huts, looting of their meagre belongings, dishonouring and rape of their women, and above all, making their life untenable.

At about 10 a.m., on 16 July an organized group of villagers from Fawliyapara in the refugee camp area, armed with wood and bamboo sticks, pickaxes, mattocks, swords, knives and bamboo spears, attacked Rohingya refugees (both registered and unregistered) in Kutupalong camp killing at least one refugee and seriously injuring twenty others, including four women, while destroying many refugee shacks and huts.

According to a refugee elder, “The local people first attacked the unregistered camp where the local destroyed some shacks and huts. Some refugees were injured in the clash with the locals. They then moved and attacked the registered camp.” “We found twenty refugees were seriously injured, and others have minor injuries. The seriously injured refugees — Rahamat Ullah, 20, unregistered; Nowbi Hussain, 60, unregistered; Abdul Hamid, 53, unregistered; Mohamed Musa, 22, registered, and Mustafa Kamal, 25, registered — were admitted to the Kutupalong Camp Health Clinic.”

There were many other injured refugees who could not have access to medical treatment as the security personnel did not allow them to go to the MSF health clinic.

The camp authorities and local administration officers imposed curfew prohibiting the movement, and gathering in group of three persons in the camp area after 8:00pm.


“If the authorities aren’t able to restore the security and laws and order situation in and around the camps, the situation of the camps will get worse in the future,” he also added.

The Ukiya Township authorities came to the camp with security personnel to investigate the incident, why the locals attacked the refugees, said a local from Kutupalong.

According to a refugee leader who do not want to be named for security reason said that on the occurrence day the musclemen cum tools collectors of Baktar Member detained and tied up with rope four Rohingya refugees near the forest for non payment of tools Tk.10/- per head, which were illegally collecting every day from about 500 refugees who were going to collect the fire wood. On hearing the accident the relatives and neighbours of the victims rushed to the spot and got release the victims. After 2-3 hours the musclemen in an organized gang of about 200 villagers escorted by the police came and attacked both unregistered and registered refugees camps at Kutupalong in Cox’s Bazar Dist.

It is imperative that all these vulnerable people, as they have ‘well founded fear of persecution’ in Burma, should be registered as refugees. On the other hand, since the refugees are on the soil of Bangladesh, they should be adequately protected from all troubles; no matter they are registered or undocumented, in the interest of law and order situation as well as humanity, which is reflected in customary international law. ##