23RD ANNIVERSARY OF 1988 PEOPLE’S UPRISING IN BURMA
23RD ANNIVERSARY OF 8-8-88 UPRISING

The August 8th, 2011, is the 23rd anniversary of the day when millions of people across Burma demanded an end to 26 years of military misrule and the installation of a democratic government, which is still a dream. Like lightning soldiers appeared shooting the crowds of unarmed demonstrators with automatic rifles. They bayoneted the people, shot red cross workers as they attempted to aid the wounded. The pavement turned red. They had opened fire in front of the Rangoon General Hospital, killing doctors, nurses and male and female students belonging to colleges, universities and even primary schools' students. On August 12, 1988, President U Sein Lwin resigned after 17 days in office. People danced in the streets of Rangoon. Despite the joy, an uneasy calm prevailed. After killing 3,000 people the Burmese army seized power on September 18, 1988. The movement began in March of that year and lasted until the brief flowering of democracy. The army imprisoned thousands causing a generation of students to flee the country.

8-8-88 still echoes in the ears of Burma's oppressors. The uprising still haunted the Government. Burma still has 2,000 political prisoners including the iconic leaders of 8-8-88 uprising; Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Min Zay Ya, Htay Kywe and many others. Having served long sentences for their involvement in the events of 1988, they have since been imprisoned again for taking part in the monk-led Saffron Revolution of September 2007. It is now reported that a visit by a UN human rights envoy is pending upon whose attestation the country will probably improve its democratic ranking. 23 years after 8-8-88 uprising it is time for ASEAN to get it right in Burma. The Burmese government held out an olive branch to its critics pledging to continue talks with democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi and allow a visit by a UN human rights envoy.

In a rare news conference, information minister Kyaw Hsan said the government would continue the meetings for the benefit of the people. He also said Thomas Ojea Quintana, special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, would return back. The USA and the international community have called for a number of reforms including the release of 2,000 political prisoners. Suu Kyi's trip to Bago and Thanetpin, both towns about 50 miles north of the former capital, Rangoon, was viewed as her first political trip since her release. Burmese government President Thein Sein announced on August 17th that his government will allow exiles to return home and will consider leniency with respect to offences other than murder.

Aung San Suu Kyi held talks with President Thein Sein for about one hour on Friday, 19th August 2011. What Suu Kyi and Thein Sein discussed was unknown so far. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's trip to Naypyidaw is a significant step for reconciliation. The US is calling for not to talk the talk but to walk the walk. ASEAN will make a decision on whether to award Burma its 2014 Chair, and the government may be using such announcements and the meeting with Suu Kyi to persuade ASEAN to act in its favour. Cont. P. 3
FROM P. 2  Burmese government invited armed groups for peace talk. Armed groups who are in favour of peace are urged to contact respective regional or state governments as a preliminary step for the peace talks with the central government, the announcement said. The peace talk offer came a day after Burmese President U Thein Sein outlined new policy dealing with ethnic armed groups and dissidents staying in and out of the country.

With regards to the Rohingya’s crisis it is reported that many Rohingyas believe that President U Thein Sein had shown leniency toward Rohingya as he had expressed it while he had visited Buthidaung in 2010 as Prime Minister for election campaign. The Thai boat crisis of 2009 should have made clear that regional solutions are needed to solve this issue. There has to be sustained ASEAN pressure on Burma before awarding 2014 its Chair to stop the ethnic cleansing policy and to recognise the Muslim Rohingya alongside the 135 non-Muslim ethnic races. ##

COVER STORY : 23 RD. 8888 UPRISING DAY 
BURMESE MARK 23 RD ANNIVERSARY OF 1988 PEOPLE’S UPRISING DAY

By Naw Noreen, August 8, 2011, DVB NEWS:  Crowds of Burmese people today gathered across the country to mark 23 rd Anniversary of 1988 people’s uprising day, which heralded the emergence of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi but was brutally put down by the army on 18 September 1988.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi led tributes in Rangoon, where around 1000 people held a minute’s silence. According to AFP, she wrote in guestbook: “I would like you all to think about what has happened and not forget.”

More than 3000 people were killed by troops as they marched in urban areas across the country in what is now known popularly as the ‘8888 uprising’, given that it began on 8 August 1988. The demonstrations started off as protests against Burma’s woeful economic situation and the shock devaluation of the currency by then dictator Ne Win, but quickly turned into wider anger at widespread human rights abuses.

That anger has not abated, according to National League for Democracy (NLD) member Than Aung, who attended an event in Magwe division’s Yaynanchaung township. “The 8888 uprising is the event that spread talk of democracy across the country, and was joined by all members of the public, including students and monks. After 23 years, the desires of our fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives has not yet been fulfilled.” “Government authorities are said to have kept a close eye on events in Rangoon, although unlike past years no harassment has been reported. Khin Moe Aye, who as a student marched in 1988 and helped organize the Rangoon event today, said: “I feel like we have our unity and strength back as now people are gathering here to mark the day, just the same way and with the same spirit they gathered in the pouring rain [back in 1988].” ##
The Burmese opposition parties in Burma and groups in foreign countries hold ceremonies to mark 23 rd Anniversary of ‘8888’ uprising day in Burma—despite Burmese government’s silence—on Monday 8 August 2011.

From Rangoon to Bangkok to Manila to Tokyo to New York to London, demonstrators rallied to remember Burma’s roar of uprising protest in 1988 before it was crushed in a wave of killings. Burmese oppositions inside and exiled and supporters came together to remember the 23rd anniversary of the August 8, 1988 uprising—known as “8888”—against the military government of General Ne Win and to continue a call for full democracy and respect for human rights in Burma. Unlike Filipinos’ successful ousting of the Marcos regime, however, Rangoon saw repression and the deaths of an estimated 3,000 protestors.

Together with pro-democracy groups around the world, the protestors expressed support for the ongoing international campaign to establish a United Nations-led Commission of Inquiry to investigate Burma’s crimes against humanity. They also denounced the military regime’s continued political repression and gross human rights abuses despite having a new Parliament after Burma’s controversial elections in 2010.

In Thailand protesters hold placards and shout slogans as they gather during a demonstration to mark the 23rd anniversary of the 1988 uprising in Burma in front of the Burmese embassy in Bangkok on Sunday, August 7, 2011. The activists called for the release of all imprisoned political prisoners and students’ leaders and cooperation with political opponents and ethnic groups, reports AFP.

In New Delhi, Burmese pro-democracy protestors with headband marked the day with demonstrations and denouncements of continued human rights abuse and the detention of political prisoners, according to media reports.

In London, about 100 people demonstrated outside the German embassy in protest against the German government’s opposition to a proposal for a UN Commission of Inquiry, according to the Burma Campaign UK.

“The German government is protecting rapists and war criminals in Burma,” said Zoya Phan of the Burma Campaign UK. “A UN Inquiry could help reduce abuses in Burma, but Germany opposes it because it puts business before human rights. The price is likely to be paid by ethnic minority women being raped, and by political prisoners still in jail.” The campaign reported that actions also took place in Germany and at German Embassies in Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Ireland and Norway.

In Burmese former capital Rangoon hundreds of Burmese people led by Burmese Opposition pro-democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi gathered at Thadu monastery in Kyimyindaing Township in Rangoon city on Monday 8 August 2011 to mark the 23 rd anniversary of the popular 8888 uprising day in Burma which demanded democratic change in Burma in 1988. Hundreds of democracy activists, including officials from political parties which took part in last year’s general elections, joined Suu Kyi for one minute’s silence in honor of protestors killed in the 88 uprising.

Cont. P. 6
Plainclothes security officers and anti-riot police trucks were seen near the monastery, but participants said that no disturbance was made to the occasion. One of the participants, Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, a leader of the opposition Democratic Party (Myanmar), agreed: “Without democracy in our country, we will work on together under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi.”

During Monday’s anniversary ceremony at a Buddhist monastery in Rangoon, Daw Suu Kyi, who made her first political appearance during the 8888 uprising, said that unity and concerted efforts within opposition groups would be crucial in reaching the common goal of democratic reforms in the country. Daw Suu Kyi also held a robe donation ceremony at the Thadu Monastery on Monday morning.

The World Federation of Democratic Youth commemorate the 23rd anniversary of 8888 people’s uprising day and express its solidarity with the struggling people of Burma and with other member organizations there for their aspiration of peace, democracy and change.

Commemoration on 23rd Anniversary of 8888 at a monastery in Thingganjun Township in Rangoon was also held. The Commemoration was well participated with 88 Generation Students Groups, NLD leaders and many others people without party affiliation. There was also distribution of flyers and paper wishing for peace and call for release of political prisoners, end of armed conflicts in ethnic areas and initiation of tripartite dialogue.

It may be mentioned here that the history of Burma is full of struggle by the students since its liberation colonialism and there are remarkable movements in last 50 years against military dictatorship. The most historic and notable student movement in Burmese history can be listed as July 7th Students movement in 1962, Rangoon University demonstration in 1970, U Thant Demonstration 1974, 7777 Movement 1977, Phone Maw Affair, march 13-18, 1988 and other series of recorded student movements in Burmese History. The struggle against military regime in Burma is the history of student struggle in which they have the inspirational and vanguard role for change. The climax of all the student movement was 8888 people uprising in 8th August 1988 has significant bearing in Burmese Democratic Movement that was started from March 1988 related with Phone Maw Affair.

Today marks the 23rd anniversary of the 1988 people’s uprising in Burma in which individuals from all walks of life throughout the country stood up and dared to speak out against the ruthless military regime. On this day in 1988, as many as 3,000 lives were lost when the regime responded to this people’s movement with a brutal crackdown. The efforts of those who perished trying to bring freedom to their country will not be forgotten. Marking the anniversary of the uprising, Burmese exiled groups called for the new government in Naypyidaw to release all political prisoners in a joint statement today. They also demanded an end to military attacks against ethnic minority and opposition groups as well as political dialogue with all stakeholders.

Opposition groups also called for a review of the 2008 military-drafted Constitution, which caused Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party to boycott last November’s parliamentary elections in protest. Sources: Mizima, Irrawaddy, AFP, DVB. ##
THE ROHINGYA MUSLIMS OF ARAKAN

In our ARAKAN JULY 2011 issue, we have seen that the coming of the Muslims in Arakan and Muslim influence there could be seen in a great measure. They occupied the government offices, occupied the posts of Defence Ministers, Prime Ministers, Finance minister, judges of Royal Court and other subordinate posts. 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. Some of them are mentioned as below:

1) Lashkar Wazir (Defence or War Minister) Burhanuddin: With the restoration of Min Saw-Mun to the throne of Arakan, Muslim High Officers particularly the army officers must have entered into Arakan but unfortunately we have no clear idea for want of sources. At the present state of our knowledge, we can say that Burhanuddin was the first Lashkar Wazir (Defence or War Minister), of Arakan. His name is found in Nasurullah Khondkar’s Shariatnamah. In giving his genealogy the poet writes: 1

“He was patient, heroic and there was no end of his honour, his name was Hamid-ud-din, the intelligent. In Bangal of Gaur, he was a great minister. His son Burhan-ud-din was extremely handsome, and there is no end of his virtues. His generosity was known throughout the country, he was born in the family of Siddiq and he was a Sheik and he was well known in the world by his high birth and good deeds. He was an Alim himself and was learned and he recognised merit. He brought learned men of his country and honoured them.”

Magan Thakur was appointed Prime Minister by Thado Minthar and his queen. But the king Thado Minthar died in 1652 and was succeed by his minor son Sandra Thudhamma (Chandra Sudharma 1652-1684 A.D). As the king was minor, the dowager queen (Thado’s queen and Narapatigyi’s daughter) ruled the country as regent. She gave her guardian Magan Thakur the authority to rule the country on her and her son’s behalf. Magan Thakur’s power and influence was further enhanced. Magan Thakur was a learned man, he gave asylum to the learned people and patronised the great poet Alaol. Alaol also says about him as follows: 5

“Many Muslims live in Roshang, they are all learned, virtuous and come out good family. All help me and treats me well because I am an educated man. Thakur Magan, the truthful and saintly person was the minister of the Chief queen. As the end of the days of my grief appeared, I happened to meet him. He brought me up with great care. He treats me well and his generosity bound my neck towards him. The learned people sit in his assembly and enjoy vocal and instrumental music. I was also a member of that assembly and in one such assembly there were many who engaged themselves in various amusements. Some sang songs and some played instruments. When they heard the story of Padmavati they became happy. The people of Roshang do not understand the language, so if it was composed in Bengali poem, all will be happy. So Magan Thakur ordered me to compose Padmavati and by his order I promised to compose the book.”

Cont. P. 7

1 Magan Thakur came to Roshang
3 Lashkar Wazi Sri Bara-Thakur
4 The Lashkar Wazir in Arakan. He was a Lash-krar Wazir (Defence Minister) of the king Thiri Thudhamma, who ruled Arakan from 1622-1638 AD. Poet Qazi Daulat wrote his book Sati Maina Lor Chandrani under the patronage of Ashraf Khan. The poet writes about him as follows: 2

“The sage Srijukta Ashraf Khan, belongs to Hanafi Mazhab and Chishti tariqa. He patronises Pir, teacher and wayfarer and in doing favour he does not discriminate friend or foe. He understands both political and social problems. He helps the friends and punishes the wicked. He erected mosques and excavated tanks and he is friendly to both great and small. When the king felt that his end was drawing near, he left political matters to his care. The king celebrated his coronation, and gave many presents to him and also gave him gold, cap and ten elephants and many horses. He was also given king’s dagger and robes meant for the Lashkar (Wazir). He became the head of the army. He was known as Lashkar Wazir Ashraf Khan. His power breaks the thunder and the proud head. He sits with king day and night and accompanies the king to whatever the latter goes. The queen thinks that he is better than a prince, the king also consider him to be his son and so made him a great minister.”

Sebastien Manrique also refers to this Lashkar Wazir when he says that the Lashkar Wazir led the Muslim contingent in the coronation procession of the king Thiri Thudhamma in 1635 A.D.

3 Lashkar Wazi Sri Bara-Thakur: He was the third Muslim Lashkar Wazir in Arakan, father of his more illustrious son Magan Thakur. Alaol says about Sir Bara-Thakur. Sri Bara Thakur was the Lashkar Wazir or war minister of the king Narapatigyi (1638-1645 A.D). His actual name is not known, Bara Thakur was his title.

Then we have names of three Prime ministers of the kings of Arakan in 17th century; they were (1) Magan Thakur, (2) Sayyid Musa, (3) Nabarak Majlis.

1) Prime Minister Magan Thakur: He was a son of Sri Bara Thakur, mentioned above and who was a Lashkar-Wazir or War Minister of the king Narapatigyi (1638 – 1645) (Narapagiri of Bengal writers). Magan Thakur was born of Siddiq family, family or descendants of the first Caliph Hazarat Abu Bakr, giving family background Alaol writes: 3

“He was the famous Magan who possessed excellent qualities, he was extremely handsome, and there is no end of his virtues. His generosity was known throughout the country, he was born in the family of Siddiq and he was a Sheik and he was well known in the world by his high birth and good deeds. He was an Alim himself and was learned and he recognised merit. He brought learned men of his country and honoured them.”

2) Lashkar Wazir (Defence Minister)
It is stated above that Magan Thakur ordered Alaol to compose Saiful Mulk Badiujamaal. Alaol began the work, but before completing the book Magan Thakur died and the composition of the book Saiful Mulk Badiujamaal remained incomplete. Later another Arakanese Prime Minister Sayyid Musa (discussed below) ordered Alaol to complete the book and he did so in 1669 or 1670 A.D. It was thought that Magan Thakur died before 1660 A.D.

2) Prime Minister Sayyid Musa: The next Muslim Prime Minister of Arakan was Sayyid Musa. He was appointed Prime Minister after the death of Magan Thakur. Sayyid Musa remained in this office for about a decade under the king Sanda Minar (Chandra Sudharma). Alaol received patronage from him and at his order completed the composition of Saiful Mulk Badiujamaal. Alaol writes about his patron in the following words:

"Sayyid Musa is a great man. He is a learned man and loves this poor man (Alaol himself) because I am a seeker of knowledge. He is a bounteous man and I am bound to him by his love. He called me once to his house and said that Magan who ordered you to write the book was your disciple and my friend. The book remains half-finished, but if it is completed it will please many. For my sake you write the book. I said, "composing the book is not possible at old age. I have written many books, now it behoves me to remain engaged in remembering God." He said that if you do not do it the incomplete book will not be finished, there is no one else who can do it. For three reasons you should do this work, first, your love for Magan, second, (in the story) the prince advised me: "Treat the people as your sons; do not deceive upon the people. According to religious rites, be just in state duties, and see that the strong do not oppress the weak. Be kind, be true to your religion, be kind to good people, and punish the wicked. Try to forgive and do not be impatient; do not punish anybody for pass offences. The king accepted all these principles, then bade salam to the Majlis and then all others of the family of his mother."

Alaol says that Srimanta Majlis became a mahamaya or chief or prime minister after getting Nabaraj; seems therefore that his name was Srimanta Majlis. Nabaraj was his official title. It is possible that after the death of Prime Minister Sayyid Musa, Nabaraj Majlis obtained the job. Also Alaol says about this:

"The great religious king had a prime minister known as Nabaraj Majlis, he was a great Minister and Chief of all Muslims of Roshang. Now I will tell something about Majlis. When the king went to heaven, the crown prince came to sit on the throne. Out side the throne, he stood facing the east. The Majlis wore his dress and standing before the prince advised him in the following words. Treat the people as your sons; do not deceive upon the people. According to religious rites, be just in state duties, and see that the strong do not oppress the weak. Be kind, be true to your religion, be kind to good people, and punish the wicked. Try to forgive and do not be impatient; do not punish anybody for pass offences. The king accepted all these principles, then bade salam to the Majlis and then all others of the family of his mother." Nabaraj Majlis was not only the Prime Minister of the kingdom, he was so important a personality that he was an amatya or chief or prime minister known as Nabaraj Majlis. Nabaraj Majlis ordered Alaol to complete the Lor Chandrani (began by Qazi Daulat) and to compose Tuhfa. In his Tuhfa, Alaol writes about Srimanta Sulaiman as follows:

"Roshang is a bliss country, there is no sin there and Sri Chandra Sudharma is the king there. He is widely known and he is so fortunate that other kings came and adore him. His minister Sri-yut Sulaiman is a man of heavenly knowledge, God created him at an auspicious hour. He excels (the offenders), he is kind, he is lucky and joyful, and he is a singer and plays instrumental music. He helps the lowly persons and works for other's benefit, giving up his own work. In the company of the learned, he discusses religious principles ... He cannot make it impossible to me that it is very profitable to read the Tuhfa, but people do not understand it. So he asked me to render it into Bengali and I promised to do so."

Qazi Sayyid Sawood Shah was another Chief Judge of Arakan after Qazi Daulat, whose name is available in the writings of Alaol. He writes:

Alaol calls him "Roshanger Qazi" (Qazi of Roshang), which means he was Chief Justices of the kingdom of Arakan. It appears, however, that he judged the cases according to Muslim law, applied to the Muslims. It is not clear whether he also tried the cases of the Magh citizens, and it seems doubtful whether the Maghs had their own legal system. Sayyid Sawood Shah was not only a Qazi, he was also a Sufi belonging to the Qaderiya order, because Alaol says that he became a Khalifa or chief disciple of the Qazi in the Qaderiya order. Names of some other Qazis are also available; they are Shuja Qazi, Gawa Qazi, Nala Qazi, Abdul Karim, Muhammad Husain, Usman, Abdul Jabbar, Abdul Gaffar, Muhammad Yusuf, Nur Muhammad and Raushang Ali.
From P. 7 Details about them are not available. In the last part of the 18th century, Arakan faced fierce political crisis due to factional fights and in the turmoil that followed the Burmese king Bodawpaya conquered Arakan in 1785 A.D. and annexed her to his Burmese kingdom. By that time the neighbouring kingdom of Bengal had already passed to the control of the English East India Company. Burma was soon to feel the brunt of the English rule. It happened as follows. In 1760 Chittagong was ceded to the English and there were border clashes between the two neighbours – English of Chittagong and the Burmese king. In the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1825, the English occupied Arakan, according to the Yandaboo treaty Burma ceded Arakan, Tenasserim, Manipur, Kachar and Jaintia to the English and promised to pay Taka one core to the English as war indemnity. The English laid the foundation of the town of Akyab in the same year at the confluence of Kaladan River. Akyab now became the capital of the English occupied Arakan.

Mr. Robertson who was a district magistrate of Chittagong was appointed the first civil ruler of Arakan. He assessed the condition of Arakan and sent a report to the governor general of India. In this report he said that Arakan had great potentials of growing agricultural commodities, particularly rice. Arakan had huge quantity of fallow land, and the forest-land also remained unutilised. The Arakanese or Burmese were lazy; they were not accustomed to hard work. Moreover the Society was matriarchal, in which females mostly did outdoor works. So Robertson suggested that to cultivate lands and to grow rice and other agricultural commodities, farmers from Bengal particularly Chittagong should be sent to Arakan and settled there. Mr. Paton succeeded Robertson as the ruler of Arakan. He supported Mr. Robertson’s opinion about importing Muslim agriculturists from Chittagong to Arakan. In his report we get an important evidence about Muslim population in Arakan. He gives the population figure in Arakan as follows: 13 Maghs 60 thousand, Muslims 30 thousand and Burmese 10 thousand. So on the date of the conquest of Arakan by the English, there had already been living 30 thousand Muslims and these 30 thousand Muslims were living there from before, now their descendants and successors have increased by leaps and bounds.

We have got here a starting point to get the number of Muslims in Arakan, it is around the year 1825, and the number of Muslims was 30 thousand, that is 30 percent of total population. Then followed another wave of Muslim migration into Arakan. This time they were encouraged to go there from Chittagong by the English rulers because their settlement was essential to encourage agricultural. A report says: “After the land has been got into working Chittagonians are recognised as the most capable of development and some Arakanese landlords have expressed the view that Chittagonians are preferable as tenants to any other races, both because they are willing to pay a better rent, and because they try to improve the land.”

It may be mentioned here that those Chittagonians who went to Arakan during this time, included both Muslims and Hindus; the later were professional groups and they started there their professional trade like gold and black smith, milkmen, money lenders, grocers and so on; it will be evident later in these pages that the number of Hindus who entered into Arakan was much smaller than their Muslim counterparts.

In order to get the correct number of Muslim population in Arakan in the British period, we have got to obtain the help of Census reports. These are not, however, readily available.

We have seen above that according to the report of British official, in 1826, the total population of Arakan was only one lakh, of which 30 thousand i.e. 30% were Muslims. Now according to 1911 Census, in the Akyab district alone, the number of Muslims increased to 1,78,647. The 30 thousand Muslims of Arakan of 1826 were the descendants of early settlers, Arabs, Persians, Mughals etc. With the occupation of Burma by the English, they encourage the foreigners mostly farmers from Bengal and the neighbouring district of Chittagong to come and settle in Arakan. The object of English was to cultivate fallow lands and extract resources. But it is surprising to note that though the number increased, in the 1911 Census also, the number of Muslims was only 33%. It means that not only the Muslims increased, but the people of other religious groups also increased. Taken an over-all view, the increased was not due to import of the Muslims by the British.

The Muslims of Arakan are divided into Thambaikkya, Zerbadi, Kamanchi and the Rohingyas. The Rohingyas are the most predominant, they from about 80% of the Muslim population of Arakan. In 1981 Census, the Burmese government declared that all Muslim groups of Arakan were foreigners and they were divided as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kollar</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong</td>
<td>1,86,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>15,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>3,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urya (Orissa)</td>
<td>3,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,05,027</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kollar means foreigners, probably, the word was derived from Kuli, labour. This is however, a wrong calculation, the Burmese Government deliberately distorted the figure to show that the number of Rohingyas was very small. In 1978 when Rohingyas entered into Cox’s Bazar to escape from Burmese torture, it was known that the number of Muslims in Arakan was 10 lakh or one million. In 1992 the Human Rights group of Asia Watch U.S.A. reported in one of their bulletins that there are 14 lakh Rohingyas in Arakan. In fact it is not possible to ascertain the exact number of Rohingyas in Arakan due to suppression of facts by the government. But we may accept the figure supplied by the Asia Watch that the number of Rohingyas of Arakan is 14 lakh.

Arakanese Muslims, i.e. Rohingyas mainly settled on the fertile banks of the rivers, Lemru, Kaladan, Mayu, Mingan and Naf. Naf River is the border between Bangladesh and Arakan, so the Rohingyas settled on the Arakanese side of the Naf. The villages or places where the Rohingyas settlement is most predominant are given bellow:

On both sides of the Lemru river - villages or settlements are: Sara, Bandar, Kualong, Rajarbil, Baldipara, Pangdu, Kambao, Shishur, Melatudying, Batang, Shendong, Piparang, Daspara, Meyonbu, Butlu, Halingbong, Halimpara, Chenblli, Puran para, Chittapara, Kottipara, Pakpara, Kaim, Barbassa etc. On both sides of the Mingan river—villages and settlements are: Nisa, Padog, Julapara, Mainakachha, Manjundak, Sakhariuperang, **Cont. P. 9**
From P. 8  Rajapara, Babudong, etc.

On both banks of the Kaladan river - villages and settlements are: Chandana, Miurkul, Kainipera, Bakaim, Shuling perang, Tangfak, Khwe, Afskau, Keri, Qazipara, Keyeda, Rohingya para, Ramju para, Ambari, Keyakta Khenda, Baharpura, Lakhnapan para, Kulwari, Tangangnirang, Pallapara, Meyoktang etc.

On both the sides of the Mayu river - villages and settlements are: Rathedaung, Machchari, Angperayang, Rajarbil, Rauhenpereng, Jopepereng, Samila, Puimali, Rowainga-daug, Alikhang, Moi-daug, Suofang, Maruchang, Khnachang, Gaulengi, Buthidaung, Lawang, Taimongkhalgi, etc.

On south and eastern side of the river Naf - villages and settlements are: Maungdaw, Amtala, Batala, Walideng, Kazirol, Bolibazar, Nagpara, Bera Bikdarpara, Kaaripara, Habshipara, Arabashpara, Chuju para, Rajarbil, Nurullahpara, and Ali Chanjaw, Udaung, Shilkhalgi, Andaung.

The etymology of the above place-names are worth examination by scholars. For example by a Rajarbil (Rajapara on the Mingdon river) is common in all the above lists. Julapara, Kazirol, Nurullahpara, Habshipara, Paikpara are all indicative of the founders of the places, some of these were settled by the professional classes. I have feeling that if proper survey is made and the origin and developments of the Rohingyas are studied from historical and sociological points of view, the historical perspective of the Rohingyas will be more clear and apparent.

CONCLUSION

In the above pages we have tried to place the Rohingyas in proper historical perspectives. Of late the Rohingyas have lost their former position, and they have been forced to leave their heart and home and take shelter in the neighbouring Bengal. It is not due to the fault of the Rohingyas themselves and thereason is political and coercive policy of the Burmese government. In Arakan the Rohingyas from a solid group, which is an eyesore to the Burmese government.

Burma became independent in 1948, and the misfortune of the Rohingyas began. The tales of the Rohingyas misfortunes are out of context here, so we shall not discuss them. In short we may say that the Rohingyas were victims of military rule established by General Ne Win. He and his Revolutionary Council and Burma Socialist Party Programme, made it a policy to suppress and ostracise the Rohingya Muslims out of the country. Their first step was to declare the Rohingyas as aliens, and to restrict their movements. Next the Arakanese administration was Buddhised, expelling the Muslim or transferring them to out of the places, and thus reduced their number day by day.

Next step was to ban all Rohingyas socio-cultural organisations and the Rohingya language programme broadcast from Ran goon Radio (BBS) was also discontinued. Side by side the government also perpetrated oppressions against the Rohingyas Muslims. Police and army personnel entered into the house of prominent Muslims made arrests indiscriminately, tortured money, insulted women and harassed and tortured all who opposed them in their illegal and inhuman activities.

Under these circumstances the Rohingyas had no alternative but to leave the country in search of safety. In fact the Burmese government began oppressing the Rohingyas from the beginning, i.e. after Burma became independent. But we have omitted the past history and we would like to discuss in short the two excursions of the Rohingyas across the Naf River to Bangladesh. Arakan state authorities under the supervision of the Burmese Council of State started a cleansing operation against the Rohingya Muslims in 1978. The operation was named Naggamin or King Dragon operation and its object was to intimidate the Muslims and compel them to leave Arakan. The operation was started in March 1978 and such oppression was perpetrated that within a short time the number of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh exceeded 3,00,000 who were given shelter on humanitarian grounds by the Bangladesh government.

When the government of Bangladesh took up the matter through diplomatic channel, the government of Burma denied the allegation, they rather said that due to census checking, some Bengali illegal immigrants fled to Bangladesh for fear of being detected. Through intense diplomatic exercises, in which the United Nations were also involved, the international community paid attention to this humani- tarian problem. The government of Burma was ultimately forced to take back their people. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees took active part in sending back the refugees to their homes; according to their estimate 3,00,000 Rohingyas entered into Bangladesh, stayed there for nine months.

During this time about 40,000 men, women and children died of hunger and diseases, 2,00,00 returned to their homes and the rest, majority of them left Bangladesh for India, Pakistan, U.A.E, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

The refugees returned under an agreement between the Bangladesh and Burma, but the government of Burma was not sincere in their commitments. In 1982, they enacted a Citizenship Law in which the citizens were grouped into three - National, Associate and Naturalised. The nationals those who settled in Burma before the occupation of the country by the British. Another section of the Act provided that whether a person was National or not was to be decided not by the court of law, but by the Council of State. The sole aim of this Act was to exclude the Rohingyas from Citizenship and make them a people without any right or any State. This gave the government the handle to drive the Rohingyas out of the country.

So another wave of oppression over the Rohingyas started, and the Rohingyas had no other alternative but to leave the country to save their life, property and honour. The result was that in 1991-92, again there was a Rohingya refugee problem in Bangladesh, and about 3,00,000 Rohingyas crossed over the Naf River and entered into this side of the border of Bangladesh. Again there started diplomatic exercises, again the involvement of the United Nations and the international community. The Burmese government are again taking back the Rohingyas, but their return is not yet complete.

The Rohingya refugee problem is a creation of the Burmese ruling Junta, it was created by denying the Rohingyas their citizenship rights which is inalienable, a right that cannot be taken away by enacting discriminatory law. The Rohingyas have been settling in Arakan from long before the British occupation of the country. In fact the forefathers of Rohingyas had entered into Arakan from time immortal. The Burmese ruling Junta do not try to know, that the Rohingyas have a long history, tradition and culture that they had built up in Arakan by their long and historic settlement. In fact the Rohingyas have been settling in Arakan for more than a thousand years.

Cont. P. 10
ROHINGYAS CALL ON EU TO SUPPORT UN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON BURMA

Over a period of many years the Burmese military dictatorship has been persistently violating international law. Grave human rights violations and abuses have been committed across the country. They are widespread, systematic and consistent against the ethnic peoples particularly in northern Arakan State and Eastern Burma that amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes under the terms of Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court.

The Rohingyas of Arakan in Burma are one of the most persecuted, underrepresented and voiceless peoples in 21st century. The Burmese regime has deprived them of citizenship rendering them ‘stateless in their own country’. Rape and sexual violence, murder, destruction of settlements, expulsion and other inhuman acts -- like severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, education, marriage and criminal atrocities--have been committed against them with intent to destroy this minority Muslim community from their ancestral homeland of Arakan.

The Rohingyas are not tolerated in Burma because of their ethnicity and religion, and also for their skin and South-Asian appearance. Racist disdain for the Rohingya by the Burmese authorities was exemplified recently in Burmese diplomatic correspondence which characterized the Rohingya “as ugly as ogres”. This ought to be beyond the tolerance of international civil society.

In April 1994, following attacks by Rohingya rebels, the Senior General Than Shwe ordered Gen Win Myint, the commander of the Western Regional Command (later SPDC’s Secretary 3) to carry out indiscriminate killing against the Rohingyas: It was testified by U Aung Linn Htut, a former Intelligence officer who served as a senior diplomat at the Burmese Embassy in Washington that Than Shwe ordered Gen Win Myint, the commander of the Western Regional Command “Eliminate them! Don’t even leave an infant alive! They are just kala [a degrading term for people of Indian descent], not human! Sentence them to the maximum imprisonment!” Then the army rounded up more than 400 people, including civilians, and as soon as they received their orders from the GHQ office, they killed them all. Later the woodcutters from Buthidaung had spotted a mass grave with piles of human skeletons in Mayu hills. But on information, the human remains were immediately removed by the army. This systematic killing may amount to an act of genocide.

Mr Quintana, the first UN Special Rapporteur to visit northern Arakan State in February 2010, expressed his deep concern about the systematic and widespread discrimination faced by the Rohingyas. The report titled “Crimes against Humanity in Western Burma: The situation on Rohingyas” released in June 2010 by the Irish Centre for Human Rights (ICHR) affirms that international community has the responsibility to protect the Rohingyas, to respond to the allegations of Crimes against Humanity and to ensure that violations and impunity do not continue for another generation.

Following the deeply flawed national elections of 2010, attacks against ethnic minorities in eastern Burma have escalated with extra judicial killing and torture, rape, forced labour and forced portering. In February 2011, the regime also rejected 16 separate requests for investigations into human rights abuses made by the UN Human Rights Council as part of the Universal Periodic Review. These inhuman actions of the Burmese regime have created internally displaced persons (IDPs), outflows refugees across the international borders and humanitarian crises posing threat to regional instability having dimension in the perspective of internationalism.

We strongly support the recommendation, in March 2010, by the UN Special Rapporteur Mr. Quintana to establish a Commission of Inquiry into possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. We call upon the international community and UN Member States, including EU and ASEAN, to support the commission of inquiry in the interest of international peace and security, and for the protection and promotion of democracy and human rights in Burma.

As the European Union prepares to draft the next UN General Assembly resolution on Burma, EU members must agree to include the establishment of an inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity. ##

FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

From P. 9

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THE ARREST OF 150 BURMESE ROHINGYAS FOR SO-CALLED ILLEGAL TRAVEL

BY M. A. ALAM

150 Burmese Rohingyas from the Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships in western Burma’s Arakan State have been arrested on charge of so-called illegal travel within past five months. Branding them as Bengali, the Rangoon based weekly Seven Days Journal reported on 12 August 2011.

They have been arrested while trying to immigrate into Burma Proper through Thandwe in southern Arakan state, reported the Seven Days, quoting U Ko Ko Maung, the director of the Department of Immigration and Population in Thandwe.

The report said some of them were caught from passenger vehicles and some others were caught while trying to cross the gate by using motorbikes during the night.

“They were arrested from different exit points including the Sarnitaung gate in Thandwe, during the five months before July 18th this year”, said U Ko Ko Maung.

It is the law that any Muslim who was born to parents who are ethnics of Burma and is the holder of national identity card is allowed to travel across the country without any approval from the immigration department from July 18th this year.

By that official travel allowance, the Kaman Muslims and Myanmar-gyis (Baruwas) who have been living as ethnic groups in the Arakan state for hundreds of years will be able to travel across Burma. However most of the Rohingya Muslims who are living in northern Rakhine state will not be allowed to travel away from the area as they are regarded as alien Bengali Muslims, the report said.

The Burmese regime has initiated practices to prevent migration by the Rohingyas who are living in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships in northern Arakan State into the mainland by forming a squad named "The Team for Preventing Bengali Migration into the Mainland". This began in 2002. The so-called Alien Bengalis (Rohingyas) are allowed to travel only for the purposes of health and education with prior approval from the immigration departments in their respective areas.

U Ko Ko Maung told the Journal that as the Bengalis are not native to Burma, they will be arrested if they will travel into the restricted areas without the approval from an immigration department official.

“They cannot hope to have the same equal rights of the people who were actually born from the original ethnic minorities of the country”, he said.

The Burmese regime has issued temporary national identity cards to most of the Rohingya Muslim people living in these townships in northern Arakan State, recognizing them as Bengali peoples who entered illegally here from neighboring Bangladesh, said the official.

It may be mentioned here that the Burmese government had stringently restricted every Muslim from Arakan State from traveling within and outside of the state for decades. But the restriction was lifted on the 15th of July and any Muslims, excluding those who are holding white identity cards and are therefore guest citizens, have been allowed to travel freely across the country.

But Maungdaw Township General Administrator (earlier known as Mayaka in Burmese) U Aung Kyaw Oo on July 22 released an order against the Rohingya community calling them as Bengalis and need to use Form-4 while traveling from one place to another place, reports Kaladan Press.

In reality, Form(4) is meant only for foreigners, but the authorities forced the Rohingya people to complete this form when they are traveling to other places.

Otherwise Rohingya travelers are not allowed to go other places without Form-4. The authorities also forced them into putting Bengali as their national name in place of Rohingya in the Form, said a trader from the Maungdaw Township. The official order also mentioned that if anyone would not take Form-4 from the concerned Immigration Department, the traveler would automatically commit crimes against existing law Act No. (188) and the concerned authorities will give punishment to them.

On 1 August, 2011 the Thandwe Township administrator also issued an official order where stating that white national ID card holders with Bengali names were not allowed to travel outside of Arakan State freely. If any white identity card holders want to travel outside of Arakan State to other areas of Burma, they must be obtain the traveling form No. 4 from immigration. Moreover, there was a note in the official order that there will be punishment for anyone who does not follow the direction in the order.

The Muslims of Arakan State being recognized as Bengali, however, have to fill out Form No. 4 in their respective immigration departments to get approval for any Travel Pass, necessary for health and education purposes, reported Narinjara News.

The Narinjara News referring its sources further said that the Burmese government has recognized most of the Muslims living in the townships of Sittwe, Buthidaung and Maungdaw in Arakan State as Bengali guest citizens and as a result has been restricting their travels due to its fear that most of the Muslims will migrate into the mainland Burma if they are allowed.

It is learnt that recently the Thandwe Immigration official downloaded 2 Muslim young ladies of Thandwe Township who are travelling with National ID Card, after completing all travel formalities, from air plane for having Bengali names (Muslim names) in their ID Cards. Later they went to Police Station to file a case for financial loss and deprivation of citizenship rights granted new constitution of Burma. But the police did not register the case saying that they could not file the case against their fellow Govt. officials. Meanwhile, the Rohingyas worldwide condemned this racist action of the regime as a policy of ‘ethnic cleansing’ to exterminate the remaining Rohingya population from Arakan. They demanded immediate restoration of their citizenship and ethnic rights.

Sources: The Seven Days Journal, Narinjara News and Kaladan News.
Residents know that they can abuse Rohingya refugees with impunity because the unregistered refugees cannot access justice. Furthermore, those not registered are not allowed to work, nor are they provided with any food or livelihood assistance. As a result, they face severe malnutrition.

Rohingya also face unlimited detention for working illegally, even though it is often the only way they can keep their families alive. Many Rohingya women are left alone while their husbands are held in detention or are forced to stay far away from their families to make money for their survival. Unregistered Rohingya refugee women in these circumstances have suffered sexual assaults, but cannot access justice because of their own lack of legal status.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in reducing poverty and lowering the rates of maternal and child mortality over time. It has proved resilient in the face of famines, cyclones and civil war. As a result, Bangladesh is one of the top development aid recipients, with more than $US2 billion provided last year primarily from western countries like the United States and the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately, little of the international aid money is going to help the Rohingya. In fact, Bangladesh is willing to deprive its own citizens of international assistance in order to maintain inhospitable conditions for the Rohingya. Recently, Bangladeshi authorities rejected a $33 million aid package from the United Nations intended for Cox’s Bazar, one of the most impoverished districts in the country, and where the majority of Rohingya refugees live.

The UN program was designed to help reverse the annual three percent economic decline, a decline that Minister Razzaque blames on the Rohingya refugees. Other Bangladesh authorities say that the aid package was rejected because it might encourage other Rohingya currently living in Burma to flee to Bangladesh. This is appalling.

Bangladesh has not been forced to deal with the problem of the Rohingya refugees alone. Western countries provide the bulk of funds for the UN refugee agency and nongovernmental organizations that provide assistance. Eight western countries have also resettled more than 700 Rohingya refugees. Yet last October, Bangladesh abruptly halted all refugee resettlement, including for urgent medical cases.

Bangladesh and other refugee-hosting countries in the region must recognize that the Rohingya refugees are not going to stop escaping from Burma until the Burmese government ends the ongoing persecution of these people. Instead of blaming the victims, Bangladesh, along with China, India and Thailand, must address the root cause and pressure Burma to reinstate citizenship rights for the Rohingya. Bangladesh has leverage with its neighbour – Dhaka’s relationship with Burma has grown significantly since a deal was agreed to create a gas pipeline from western Burma through Bangladesh and on to India.

After hosting Rohingya refugees for more than 30 years, the Bangladeshi authorities must realize that denying them their basic rights does nothing to resolve the problems posed by their presence in the country. Now is the time for the Government of Bangladesh to demonstrate that it is a responsible and accountable international partner by prioritising and protecting the rights of Rohingya refugees. ##

Michel Gabaudan is president of Refugees International, a Washington DC-based organization that advocates to end refugee crises and receives no government or UN funding. For more information, please visit the website.
By Barrister Harun Ur Rashid

Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh Mijarul Quayes will be paying a visit to Myanmar to meet his counterpart on August 24 for two days to discuss bilateral and regional issues. The last meeting at the foreign secretary level took place in Dhaka on December 28, 2009. The trip is welcomed.

It is reported that the issues to be discussed, among others, may include:
- Multi-modal transport connectivity;
- Border security to prevent criminal activities and illegal immigration;
- Facilitation of trade;
- Repatriation of remaining Rohingya refugees;
- Cooperation in other areas including energy and agriculture.

Myanmar is the only other neighbour of Bangladesh besides India. Bangladesh shares 271 km of border with Myanmar – both land and water. The two countries share the boundary Naaf River. Bangladesh is adjacent to two states of Myanmar – Rakhaing and Chin.

Myanmar recognised Bangladesh on January 13, 1972 (the 7th country to do so) and Bangladesh remembers this friendly gesture. Soon after independence, Bangladesh attached importance to its relations with Myanmar and in May 72, the Bangladesh foreign minister visited Myanmar, and sent our senior-most diplomat. Myanmar is so close but at the same time it is too far because of lack of interconnectivity. One has to travel by air from Bangladesh to Myanmar through a third country. This is unacceptable and needs to be sorted out as soon as possible for mutual benefit.

Bilateral relations are friendly but interactions between the two neighbours leave much to be desired. There are about 10 Agreements between the two countries, including those on areas of land boundary management, trade, transport, and prevention of narcotics smuggling. However, there is no direct road connectivity, no air link and no shipping connection between the two countries.

With the availability of weather-proof road, people-to-people contact is bound to increase and, consequently, commercial and trade opportunities will receive further boost between the two neighbouring countries. The road could also be used for establishing links with China and Thailand. Meanwhile, China has agreed in principle to Bangladesh’s proposal of road connectivity through Myanmar to China’s Yunnan province.

Since the present government came to power, there has been an attempt to inject momentum and dynamism into bilateral relations. On May 16, 2009, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni visited Myanmar and held official talks with her counterpart U Nyan Win.

They reportedly discussed a host of issues, including repatriation of the remaining Rohingya refugees, relaxation of visa requirements for citizens of either country, facilitation of banking services, increased border trade, export of surplus power to Bangladesh, road link between the two countries up to China, direct air link, and sharing bandwidth with fiber-optic cable.

In January 2011, the Bangladesh foreign minister attended the 13th ministerial level meeting of BIMSTEC in Myanmar, and on the sidelines she discussed bilateral issues with her counterpart. She held discussions with a private company in Myanmar to purchase hydropower from adjoining Rakhaing state (Arakan).

The amount of bilateral trade is meager. It is reported that in 2008-09 Bangladesh’s exports stood at $9.17 million and imports from Myanmar at $66.65 million. To increase trade, the joint trade commission of Bangladesh and Myanmar held its fifth meeting on July 21-22. It was agreed that the two countries would raise bilateral trade to $550 million from $160 million now. Both countries agreed to increase the ceiling for transaction value to $50,000 per consignment from $30,000. Officials also discussed the potential for setting up wholesale border markets at Bangladesh’s Teknaf and Myanmar’s Maungdaw, a border town.

They also discussed how to complete border transactions through the Asian Clearing Union payment system as Bangladeshi importers now settle their payments for bulk shipments through bank drafts issued by foreign banks to a third country.

One of the bilateral issues that often cause tension is related to the issue of Rohingya refugees. It first cropped up in 1978. Within a year, it was resolved amicably. The result was all the refugees were repatriated to Myanmar with the assistance of the UNHCR. However, the flow of refugees came to Bangladesh in 1991 and 1997. About 21,000 refugees remain in Bangladesh and negotiations on the issue continue.

The migration of Rohingya people to Bangladesh is a complex matter. It should not be seen merely as a refugee problem with humanitarian dimension partly because Rohingya Front has been reportedly fighting for decades for their rights.

Given the background, both countries need to identify the root cause of the issue and jointly devise effective border management to prevent the flow of Rohingyas to Bangladesh.

The political environment in Myanmar is different from that of the past. Myanmar had elections in November and a civilian government (dominated by former military officials), has been in power since March 30. The opposition leader Suu Kyi has met twice in recent weeks with representatives of the government, who have delivered conciliatory overtures toward her. On August 14, she made her first political trip to the countryside. On August 19, the government invited Suu Kyi for the first time to participate in an economic development workshop, and she met for the first time with President Thein Sein.

Given the political atmosphere, Bangladesh may now seize the opportunity to expand its relations, both in depth and in dimension, with the government of Myanmar, including the desirability of a visit of Bangladesh prime minister to Myanmar.

The geographical proximity makes both countries natural partners, and they should see cooperative efforts and interconnectivity as catalysts for economic growth and prosperity for the people of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

FOC Meeting in Capital Naypyidaw

The annual Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) meeting was held on August 25, 2011 is so far the highest level connections between the officials of Bangladesh and Burma since the new government took office in Burma. Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes led Bangladesh delegation in the meeting, where he referred to full list of residual Burmese refugees living in Bangladesh camps and requested Burma for early verification and commencement of repatriation, according to an official newsletter of Bangladesh.

“It was also agreed that the two sides would explore mechanisms for cooperation in identifying and repatriating undocumented Burmese nationals living in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh foreign secretary also raised the issue of expediting repatriation when he called on Burmese Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin. The Burmese foreign minister assured him of looking into the matter personally with a view to an early resolution of the longstanding issue.”

During the FOC, Bangladesh and Burma agreed to conclude a memorandum of understanding to form a joint commission. Among other issues, the Bangladesh foreign secretary also discussed with his Burma counterpart cooperation in energy sectors, and physical connectivity including direct road link, air service and coastal shipping. # Source: The Daily Star, Dhaka.
YANGON (25 August 2011) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, urged the Government to intensify its efforts to implement its own commitments and to fulfill its international human rights obligations.

“This is a key moment in Burma’s history and there are real opportunities for positive and meaningful developments to improve the human rights situation and bring about a genuine transition to democracy,” Mr. Ojea Quintana said at the end of his five-day mission to the country. “The new Government has taken a number of steps towards these ends. Yet, many serious human rights issues remain and they need to be addressed.”

During his five-day stay in Burma, Quintana met with some senior government officials in Nay Pyi Taw, including Foreign Minister U Wuuna Maung Lwin, Home Minister Lieutenant-General Ko Ko, Labor Minister U Aung Kyi and Vice Police Chief Brigadier-General Zaw Win. The two sides had discussions on progress and improvement of human rights in Burma.

Besides, Quintana also met speakers of the Parliamentary House of Representatives U Shwe Mann and Parliamentary House of Nationalities U Khin Aung Myint separately and attended the ongoing parliament sessions in Nay Pyi Taw as observer.

Moreover, he met with Union Chief Justice U Tun Oo and Union Attorney-General Dr. Tun Shin, visited Myanmar’s Human Rights Promotion and Protection House of Nationalities U Khin Aung Myint separately and attended the ongoing parliament sessions in Nay Pyi Taw as observer.

Before ending his visit, Quintana met with Burmese political figure Aung San Suu Kyi at her residence and discussed with her a wide range of important human rights issues.

Prisoners of Conscience

“Of key concern to me and to the international community is the continuing detention of a large number of prisoners of conscience. In my meetings with the Government, I conveyed my firm belief that their release is a central and necessary step towards national reconciliation and would bring more benefit to Burma’s efforts towards democracy. I reiterate that call now.”

Torture and Ill-treatment

“Another concern is the continuing allegations of torture and ill-treatment during interrogation, the use of prisoners as porters for the military, and the transfers of prisoners to prisons in remote areas where they are unable to receive family visits or packages of essential medicine and supplemental food. In Insein prison, I heard disturbing testimonies of prolonged sleep and food deprivation during interrogation, beatings, and the burning of bodily parts, including genital organs. I also heard accounts of prisoners being confined in cells normally used for prison dogs as means of punishment.”

Deprivation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

“Concerns regarding the availability and accessibility of education and health care were specifically highlighted (by many Interlocutors), as well as the need for the teaching of ethnic minority languages in schools in minority areas – issues I have raised in my previous reports. Other concerns highlighted addressed land and housing rights, particularly with respect to the impact of infrastructure projects, land confiscations by the military and development-induced displacement.”

The Legal System

“The capacity, independence and impartiality of the judiciary remain outstanding issues in Burma. Various laws and legal provisions that limit fundamental rights and contravene international human rights standards remain in existence. I am encouraged to hear that a process to review and possibly amend or revoke national legislation is underway.”

Justice

“Justice and accountability measures, as well as measures to ensure access to the truth, are fundamental for Burma to face its past and current human rights challenges, and to move forward towards national reconciliation. I would again encourage the Government to demonstrate its willingness and commitment to address these concerns and to take the necessary measures for investigations of human rights violations to be conducted in an independent, impartial and credible manner, without delay.”

The New Parliament

“I welcome what seems to be an opening of space for different actors and parties to engage in the political process. At the same time, I note the strong need to enhance the capacity and functioning of this new institution and of its members. Also crucial is the need to clarify a number of the Parliament’s internal rules and procedures, including establishing clear rules governing parliamentary immunity.”

During his mission, the Special Rapporteur designated by the UN Human Rights Council to monitor and report on the situation in Burma met with Government ministers and various other relevant stakeholders, among them opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Mr. Ojea Quintana also saw the new parliament in session in Naypyidaw, and visited the Insein Prison where he met with prisoners of conscience.

Mr. Tomás Ojea Quintana (Argentina) was appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in May 2008. As Special Rapporteur, he is independent from any government or organization and serves in his individual capacity. ##
Students of Sittwe University marched peacefully through the city center from 1 pm to 3 pm today to call for a reduction in transportation costs, a witness in Sittwe told The Irrawaddy on Wednesday. The protest ended only after local authorities, including the chief minister of Arakan State, Hla Maung Tin, promised to respond to the protesters’ demands.

The price of a round-trip taxi-ferry ticket recently rose from 200 to 300 kyat (US $0.26-0.39), residents of Sittwe said. In July 2010, hundreds of students from the Technological University in Sittwe protested against an increase in school bus fares.

Sittwe is often seen as a hotbed of political dissent in Burma. Hundreds of demonstrators in the city took part in the monk-led Saffron Revolution in September 2007, which was sparked by a protest over a hike in gasoline prices.##

Principal Professor N.M. Habibullah died on Thursday 28 July 2011 around 11.30 P.M. at Chittagong Metropolitan Hospital, O.R. Nizam Road, Chittagong (Inna Lillahi Waainnah Elahi Razeun). He died at the age of 65 years old.

He left his old mother, wife, two sons and one daughter and a host of relatives and respected associates. His first Namazai-Janada (Funeral Prayer) was held on 29 July 2011 in the morning around 11 A.M at Hazarat Garibullah Shah Mazar and his second Namazai-Janada was held after Asar Prayer at his home village, Later he was rested in peace at his family graveyard. On 28 July 2011, he was admitted to Chittagong Metropolitan Hospital, at the incentive care. Two years ago he had an open heart surgery in Dhaka.

Professor N.M. Habibullah was born at Eidgha-Pukkhali, Ramu P.S., Dist. Cox’s Bazar in a renowned family in 1947. In 1972, he started his carrier as a professor of Mathematical in Cox’s Bazar Govt. College and in 2004 he became Principal of Govt. City College, Chittagong.

Prof. Habibullah dedicated his life to the welfare of poor, especially poor students. He helped and advised Rohingya leaders who are in Rohingya Movement since 1973 to till his death. He was first Bangladesh writer who wrote the History of Rohingya Nation (Rohingya Zatir Ithehash) in Bangla which was published by Bangladeshe Co-operative Book Society, Dhaka.

Rohingya people at home and aboard expressed their deep shock at the death of Prof. Habibullah. The members of ARNO expressed their deep sorrow on the sad demise of Prof. Habibullah. It is a great loss for the Rohingya nation especially in political and education chapters and other social activities. We pray for his departed soul to be rest in the eternal peace.##

Yaba tablets have been smuggled to Bangladesh from Burma since 2001. At present, about 6% of people in the Teknaf border area are involved in narcotic drug trafficking, said a local elder from the Teknaf border. There are about 2.5 million drug users across the country, and they use about Taka 78,750 million worth of drugs per year, according to an official source.

The drug dealer packed the Yaba with plastic bag to carry to Bangladesh or other area.

“Bangladesh has become a prime destination for heroin and Yaba produced in Burma,” an elder from Cox's Bazaar said. Yaba tablets from Burma are being smuggled into Bangladesh everyday through land routes and waterways. Though the Bangladesh authorities have been trying to stop the flow of the tablets to Bangladesh, they have failed. If Burma’s authorities were not involved in drug trafficking, the flow of Yaba tablets to Bangladesh would be stopped,” an elder from Maungdaw who declined to be named for security reasons.##

01 August 2011 Kaladan News, Chittagong, Bangladesh: The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in a drive on July 29, seized over 5,000 Yaba methamphetamine tablets worth Tk 2 million and arrested a drug peddler at the main Police Station in Chittagong, Bangladesh. All the tablets came from Burma, according to a police official.

“The arrestee is identified as Md Zahid Hossain (48), son of Tajul Islam, of Moheshkhali under Cox’s Bazaar district. He carried the drugs from the Burma-Bangladesh border. He has been involved in drug trafficking since long ago.”

According to sources, a team from RAB-7 raided a guest house in the area of Asadganj in Chittagong around 8:30 am and arrested the drug peddler with the Yaba tablets. Sensing the presence of law enforcers, other drug peddlers fled the scene. Later Zahid was handed over to the Police Station for more interrogations, the sources said. Like floodwater, Yaba tablets are being smuggled to Bangladesh from Burma. From the Teknaf area alone, about 376 people are involved in drug trafficking. Of them 20 are women, said a trader from Teknaf, quoting the official data of police and border security forces.

In addition, some local influential peoples of Teknaf are also involved in drug trafficking. They have a syndicate consisting of 22 members. They distribute Yaba tablets across the country. It is a powerful syndicate, said a local trader who declined to be named.

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OVER 5,000 YABA TABLETS SEIZED ONE HELD

Students of Sittwe University launched a protest on Wednesday against rising taxi-ferry fares, according to local sources.
Thursday, 11 August 2011

A group of women U.S. senators have accused Burma's military of using rape as a weapon of war and are urging Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to pressure the Burmese government to halt the practice.

In a letter on 10 August 2011, the bipartisan group asked Secretary Clinton to support establishment of an international commission of inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer and Republicans Kay Bailey Hutchison are among the 12 signatories.

The U.S. Senate Women's Caucus on Burma sent the letter that provided a glaring look into the unease and oppressive Burmese regime. Although sustained ceasefires throughout the country encouraged peace, in some cases for 22 years, the Burmese military recently renewed attempts at ethnic cleansing. Among the tactics most commonly used are rapes. Reportedly, the Burmese military gang-raped 18 women in the Kachin Province within the first 8 days of renewed fighting. There are similar reports from neighboring Shan state, where hostilities have also resumed. Larger groups such as Shan, Karen and Kachin people have been especially targeted.

The lawmakers also quote Burma's human rights groups have repeatedly condemned Burma's authorities for abusing rights of its minority groups. Amnesty International says government troops for decades have used rape, torture, forced relocation and killing to intimidate ethnic minorities into ending their campaign for autonomy.

The United States last week appointed its first special envoy to Burma in a move to coordinate efforts with U.S. allies to get Burma's new government to implement democratic reforms. Derek Mitchell will lead U.S. efforts to improve what he called the southeast Asian nation's abysmal human rights record during four decades of military. ##


ETHNIC PARTIES CALL FOR RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND MORE HUMAN RIGHTS

Wednesday, 24 August 2011 : Mizzima News

New Delhi: Eight political parties that contested in the 1990 general election have sent a letter citing four demands to UN special rapporteur for human rights in Burma Tomas Ojea Quintana. The letter, which calls for more for human rights in ethnic areas and the release of all political prisoners, was sent through Aung San Suu Kyi when she met Quintana on Wednesday. The letter, dated August 20, said, “In the ethnic inhabited war zones, women, including teenaged girls, are being raped and government soldiers are burning villages, looting and forcible seizing villagers’ belongings.” Government troops are also forcing villagers to work as porters at the frontlines, the letter said.

“The UN Commission for Human Rights should investigate what’s happening in ethnic inhabited areas and take actions accordingly,” ZNC party Chairman Pu Cing Tsing Thang said. He also called for the release of all political prisoners unconditionally and setting up a tripartite dialogue to investigate human rights violations in Burma.

The letter also called for recognizing the National League for Democracy and ethnic political parties that won in the 1990 general election, which was never honoured by the former junta. The eight ethnic political parties said they supported an inclusive genuine dialogue with UN assistance including Aung San Suu Kyi, all political parties and ethnic groups to discuss national reconciliation with the government.

A total of 1,995 political prisoners including ethnic leaders Khun Tun Oo and General Hse Hten are serving prison sentences and many 88-Generation student leaders are still behind bars.


Burma's pro-democracy icon Daw Suu Kyi says she is encouraged after meeting with visiting the U.N. human rights envoy. Daw Suu Kyi says Wednesday's 90-minute meeting in Yangon with Tomas Ojea Quintana and leaders of her disbanded NLD focused on Myanmar's more than 2,000 political prisoners and other human rights issues. ##