CAN HILLARY CLINTON AND AUNG SAN SUU KYI CHANGE BURMA?

The US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, right, and Burmese Prime Minister U Nu, pose for a photograph in Rangoon during Dulles visit to Burma in 1955.

The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, left, shakes hands with Burmese President Thein Sein during her visit to Burma in 2011, was the highest-level US Official in 56 Years.
US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton began her first trip to Burma by meeting President Thein Sein and other top officials in Naypyidaw with armed ethnic conflicts and political prisoners top on the agenda. She was the first US Secretary of State to visit Burma in 56 years after the visit of US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in February, 1955. He was the last American Secretary of State to visit Burma during the democratic government of U Nu. At that time, Burma was considered the jewel of Asia. It is encouraging that Aung San Suu Kyi is now free to take part in the political process, but that will not be sufficient unless all political parties can compete in free, fair, and credible elections.

In addition to calling for the release of political prisoners and an end to ethnic violence, Clinton said the US wants to see a truly political system and improvement in human rights. She also warned the country's leaders to break suspected illicit military, nuclear and ballistic missile cooperation with North Korea that may violate UN sanctions. Thein Sein had outlined his government's plans for reform and asked for US help in making the transition from military to full civilian rule.

The modest first steps Clinton announced include Washington no longer blocking enhanced cooperation between Burma and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that could lead to the approval of much-needed loans and support for the Burma. Also, the US would support intensified UN health and microfinance program and resume bilateral counter - narcotics effort.

Following her press conference at Suu Kyi's lakeside villa, the US Secretary of State addressed reporters for a second time in Rangoon that day when she announced that the US has offered Burma US $ 1.2 million in aid to support micro-finance, health care and assistance for the victims of landmines, and would also support US university and foundations to increase academic exchange collaboration in health, governance and other matters. Hillary told the representatives of minorities (including Rohingya) unity in diversity, recognize to each other, respect to each other and work together.

The assessment team from the World Bank was part of a package that Clinton announced in Naypyidaw offering a handful of modest political and economic concessions to Burma as reward for its recent tentative reforms. Clinton's visit signifies the Americans' willingness to invest major political capital in Burma. Clinton brings with her not only the momentum of global outcry for freedom, but also as a leading member of the US administration, she can also use her influence to help reconcile Burma's various political factions, including the military, democracy activists, and ethnic nationalities.

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Meanwhile, the Chinese were openly worried and concerned of Clinton's visit to Burma. Beijing had taken it as a move to woo Naypyidaw away from its ambit, intruding into its traditional sphere of influence and seen as the US encirclement to isolate and limit its rising power. China still has its proxy's armies United Wa Stae Army (UWSA) and National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA). The question of China making use of its proxies to disrupt the warming up of US relation with Burma still looks quite remote for the time being, but replaying the scenario of aiding them could not be ruled out The Global Times, a mouthpiece for the Chinese government wrote that China has no resistance toward Burma seeking improved relationship with the West, but it will not accept this while seeing its interests stamped on. Clinton's visit has worried China, put the ball firmly in Thein Sein's court and uplift the spirit of democratic and ethnic opposition camps. Thein Sein should be clear by now that using political prisoners as bargaining chips and keeping armed internal conflict alive to justify the military supremacy role would not work with the US. And if he wants bigger carrot, which is the comprehensive lifting of sanctions and increased legitimacy, he will have to deliver more and not just dwell on his recent piecemeal approach or half-hearted reform process.

The plight of the Rohingya people remains unchanged, though Thein Sein had promised to change the fate of Rohingyas on his visit to Buthidaung Town before the election of 2010. All kinds of persecution are still being tried against them on religious, as well as racial, grounds. It is vital that the US continues to press the regime to recognise the citizenship and ethnic rights of Rohingya. Meanwhile, the restrictions on their basic freedoms like religious freedom, freedom of movement, marriage, education and trade and business must be lifted forthwith. In order to instill sense of security in the minds of terrorized Rohingya people, with freedom from fear, abolish or remove immediately the cruel Nasaka and SARAPA forces and other repressive functionaries from northern Arakan. ##

With the assassination of General Aung San, the father of Suu Kyi, after Burma's independence from Britain, the dream of a peaceful and democratic Burma quickly faded. Even today, while resisting the central government's ethnocentric nationalism and chauvinism for decades, Burma's various opposition groups, while they share a common goal for democracy, have never united under a common leadership or set of principles. Distrustful of the population, the Burmese army took over political and economic control, and according to commentator Mary P. Callahan, “after cleaning house inside the army, Gen. Ne Win led the ultimate offensive against civilian parliamentary ruler Prime Minister U Nu's Government in March 1962.” Again in 1990, under a new name and a new set of army generals, an even more brutal military junta grabbed political power back from the election-winning National League for Democracy.

Following the Saffron Revolution of 2007, the Burmese military regime was viewed negatively by the world at-large. With the fresh memory of monks' blood on their hands, it could no longer use the blunt force of violence against Aung San Suu Kyi, as it did during the 2003 Depayin Massacre. 

Callahan concluded that there would be no easy solutions to the problem of disseminating this security-obsessed state and replacing it with a new one that treats citizens with dignity and accountability. The removal of the handful of top generals and colonels from the government, and their replacement with fraudulently elected officials, will not transform the century-old command relationship between the state and society overnight. 

Callahan also rightly noted that many ethnic minority leaders question whether a democratic government based in central Burma would really commit national resources to development programs in ethnic bon Suu Kyi and her political party, order areas. And as the world focuses...
From P. 3 many minority leaders worry that their needs are not being taken into account.

The political uncertainty in Burma’s tortured history rivals that of Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping. Surely a change of clothes from military uniforms to civilian garb cannot, at this stage, be equated with a true change of heart to embrace genuine democratic reforms in Burma. The army finally released Suu Kyi from house arrest in 2010, but it has continued its brutal assaults on ethnic minorities in conflict areas. However, simultaneously, the new government began a concerted charm offensive on all fronts, including its pursuit of separate cease-fires with armed ethnic groups.

Regardless, Clinton’s visit signifies the Americans’ willingness to invest major political capital in Burma. Clinton brings with her not only the momentum of a global outcry for freedom, but also as a leading member of the U.S. administration, she can also use her influence to help reconcile Burma’s various political factions, including the military, democracy activists, and ethnic nationalities.

As Suu Kyi says, most Burmese may not understand English, but they all know the meaning of democracy and freedom. So far, Suu Kyi seems to have set aside her differences with Thein Sein. The recent gains, including the halt of a major dam project, the symbolic release of a leading member of the U.S. administration, she can also use her influence to help reconcile Burma’s various political factions, including the military, democracy activists, and ethnic nationalities.

While Thein Sein, in his 45-minutes detailed briefing, offered gradual release of political prisoners, cease-fire between his government and ethnic resistance armed forces, political reform, media freedom, adopting international agreements on nuclear programs leading to refrain or forgo its illicit dealings with North Korea, Clinton responded that the U.S. will “match action with action”.

She said: “I encouraged them to continue moving along the path of reform, and that is a path that would require releasing all political prisoners; halting hostilities in ethnic areas and seeking a true political settlement; broadening the space for political and civic activity; fully implementing legislation protecting universal freedoms of assembly, speech, and association.”

She also stressed that U.S. support for loosening restrictions on health and microfinancing programs by the United Nations and offered U.S. support for exploring other international aid, apart from the restoration and upgrading the diplomatic relation to a full embassy with an ambassador. In addition, Clinton also invited Burma to become an observer to the Lower Mekong Initiative, a U.S.-backed grouping aimed at discussing the future of Southeast Asia’s major waterway.

According to Clinton Press Availability, released in Rangoon, it writes: “This afternoon, I’m pleased to announce we will take a number of steps to demonstrate our commitment to the people. These are in addition to the more formal government-to-government actions that I announced yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. First, we will increase assistance to civil society organizations that provide micro-credit lending, healthcare, and other critical needs throughout the country, particularly in the ethnic nationality areas.

Second, we will launch a people-to-people exchange program that will include a substantial English language teaching initiative in partnership with ASEAN and the East-West Center. Third, we will work with partners here on the ground to provide assistance to citizens who suffer from the worst consequences of internal conflict, especially land mine victims. Fourth, we will be supporting the work of American universities and foundations to increase academic exchanges and collaboration on health, governance, and other matters.”

Coinciding with the visit of Clinton, Aung San Suu Kyi confirmed Wednesday, 30 November, that she will run for parliament in upcoming elections. One could’t help wonder, if this is again a choreographic move designed to give a full impact on the assumption that President Thein Sein’s reform process is a no return undertaking and on its way to irreversible journey. Whether it is only a superficial gesture or a true commitment on the part of the current Burmese government, as Ko Myat Soe, a former student leader now living in the United States, observed, twilight is finally descending on the dictators. This is a perfect time for Clinton to go to Burma and meet with Suu Kyi.

Even though she has been released from house arrest, like all other Burmese, Suu Kyi is not yet truly free. In order to fulfill her promises and those made by her father, Burma still has to release all political prisoners and must bestow equal political rights on ethnic nationalities by laying down the groundwork for a true and democratic political process.

Naypyitaw has given a 4-point proposition: ceasefire, setting up of liaison offices, freedom of movement without arms and designation of date, time and venue for negotiations on nuclear programs leading to the restoration and upgrading the diplomatic relation to a full embassy with an ambassador. The Chinese were openly worried and concerned of Clinton’s visit to Burma, which she declared was a fact-finding mission and evaluating the sincerity of Naypyitaw’s democratisation process. But taken by Beijing as a move to woo Naypyitaw away from its ambit, intruding into its traditional sphere of influence and seen as the U.S. encirclement to isolate and limit its rising power.

Indeed, Beijing still has its proxy’s armies United Wa State Army (UWSA) and National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), both former Communist Party of Burma (CPB), which China had armed and trained, during 1968 to 1985, to overthrow the then Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) regime, headed by...
By M. A. ALAM

“The United States wants to be a partner with Burma,” Clinton said at Aung San Suu Kyi’s home in Rangoon. “We want to work with you as you further democratisation, as you release all political prisoners, as you begin the difficult but necessary process of ending the ethnic conflicts that have gone on far too long, as you hold elections that are free, fair, and credible.”

“If we go forward together, I’m confident there will be no turning back from the road to democracy,” Aung San Suu Kyi told the first US secretary of state to visit Burma in half a century. “We are not on that road yet, but we hope to get there as soon as possible with our friends.” Three points in that statement are worth noting. First, Aung San Suu Kyi … understands that her country is not only not yet a democracy but is not even on the way there. Second, that daunting reality has not discouraged her from seizing an opening provided by the liberalisation in Burma in recent months. And third, she has welcomed the United States’s cautious engagement to promote further reform.

“President Thein Sein has taken the first steps toward a long-awaited opening. His government has eased some restrictions on the media and civil society, opened a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma’s democratic opposition, rewritten election and labor laws, and released 200 prisoners of conscience,” U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said recently in Burma. “It is encouraging that political prisoners have been released, but over a thousand are still not free.” — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

will let their people live up to their God-given potential. There is no guarantee how that question will be answered. But if it is answered in a positive way, I think the potential is unlimited.” “[Burma’s] diversity - its dozens of ethnic groups and languages, its shrines, pagodas, mosques, and churches should be a source of strength,” Secretary Clinton continued. “We welcome initial steps from the government to reduce ethnic tensions .. ..... But as long as terrible violence continues ..... it will be difficult to begin a new chapter.”

“For decades, the choices of this country’s leaders kept it apart from the global economy and the community of nations,” Secretary Clinton concluded. “Today, the United States is prepared to respond to reforms with measured steps to lessen the isolation and to help improve the lives of [Burma’s] citizens. As I told President Thein Sein … the United States is prepared to walk the path of reform with you if you choose to keep moving in that direction. And there’s no doubt that direction is the right one for the people.”

“Historic transformations often happen when least expected,” Mikhail Gorbachev’s liberalising policies of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union emerged at one of the Cold War’s darkest hours. Deng Xiaoping’s economic opening followed China’s bloody – and failed – invasion of Vietnam in 1978. And South Africa’s last apartheid leader, F. W. de Klerk, was initially perceived as just another apostle for the system – hardly the man to free Nelson Mandela and oversee the end of white minority rule.

Is Burma, like South Africa under de Klerk, truly poised to emerge from a half-century of self-imposed isolation? And can Aung San Suu Kyi, the heroic opposition leader, and Thein Sein, Burma’s new president, engineer a political transition as skillfully and peacefully as Mandela and de Klerk did for South Africa in the early 1990s? Daw Suu Kyi is now free to take part in the political process and the NLD recently announced that it will field candidates in the forthcoming by-elections to the country’s newly established parliament.

If Suu Kyi and all other political parties are permitted to campaign free of restraint, for both her own seat and to boost the electoral chances of her NLD colleagues and others, it will be clear that Thein Sein and his government are truly determined to bring their country in from the cold and Gen. Than Shwe’s so-called discipline democratic system. ##
The regime has blacklisted the name ‘Rohingya’ despite the fact that Rohingya as an ethnic group of Burma was recognized by the former parliamentary government (1948-1962). It is a part of the regime’s malevolent design to deny the Rohingya of their ethnic rights in Burma. Historically and genealogically, the Rohingya are a people who developed in Arakan from peoples of different ethnic backgrounds over the many centuries. Democratic and political changes in Burma cannot be expected unless all oppressive laws are scrapped. The regime continues applying, on the Rohingya in particular, the Burma Citizenship Law of 1982 enacted by former dictator U Ne Win, in violation of customary international law. This unjust law has put the Rohingya in a situation of statelessness.

We, therefore, urge upon the U.S. Secretary of State to highlight over the following issues during her visit to Burma:

1) To restore citizenship rights and ethnic rights of the Rohingya people. To stop persecution and human rights violations against Rohingya and other peoples.
2) To treat Rohingyas as human beings, and lift all restrictions on their freedom of movement, marriage, education, trade and business.
3) To find a permanent solution to the Rohingya boat people crisis
4) To accept Rohingya as a part of the Burma’s democratic and political process along the line of other ethnic nationalities of the country.
6) To stop attacking ethnic peoples, declare a nationwide ceasefire; and to release all political prisoners.
7) To engage in a meaningful process of dialogue with the ethnic nationalities and the democracy movement led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

**THREE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL STUDENTS JAILED**

**Thursday, 24 November 2011**

Mrauk-U, Arakan State: Three religious students were jailed on November 4, 2011. They were arrested while traveling to their hometowns from Kyauktaw where they had been studying at a madrasa (religious school), according to a Muslim Liberation Organization of Burma (MLOB) statement.

The three were Md. Haleb (32), son of Ibrahim and Alam Gir (18), son of Md. Nasir, both from Kongbaung village in Mrauk-U and Noor Shoфи (18), son of Abdu Salam, from Setkya village section of Minbya Township.”

The three first went to Kyauktaw town in 2010 for religious studies. After the madrasa was closed, they were returning to their homes by steamer during June 2011. However, a Mrauk-U immigration officer arrested the three for not having movement passes.

“Ther three were tried in court, and each was sentenced to two and half years' imprisonment. On November 4”, a relative of one of the victims said from Sittwe (Akyab), who declined to be named. One was sent to Sittwe (Akyab) jail and the two other were sent to Rangoon, according to the MLOB statement in against the Muslims, which continue The Arakanese Muslim community is concerned by the continuous persecution even under the President Thein Sein’s new civilian
A BBC report from last November that carried a map depicting Arakan state as populated by the ethnic Rohingya minority has caused anger in Burma, and once again brought to the fore accusations of entrenched racism within Burmese society.

Although published a year ago, and since corrected, the BBC report has circulated rapaciously on the internet in recent weeks, and has become the subject of a number of blog posts either criticising the BBC for implying the Rohingya are part of the Burmese population, or lamenting Buthe vitriolic responses its report has attracted.

The map in question demarcates areas of Burma as belonging to specific ethnic groups, albeit somewhat erroneously: the Shan, for instance, are said to inhabit only a third of modern-day Shan state, and the Karen are shown as the main ethnic group in Irrawaddy division.

Following the publication, the BBC’s Burmese Facebook page was hit with hundreds of complaints, some from monks, calling on the organisation to issue a public apology and even remove any reference to Rohingya from the map. Failing to apologise should result in a boycott of the BBC, some even argued.

The BBC has since amended the map to include ‘Rakhine’, the name given by the government to Arakanese, as also populating the state, but anger continues to boil.

Many Burmese believe the Rohingya to be of Bengali origin that over centuries have migrated to western Burma, a sentiment shared by the Burmese government which denies them citizenship and which for decades has meted out hefty treatment against the group, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee the country. Rohingya support groups say however that there is evidence that Islam existed in Burma prior to the now-dominant Theravada Buddhism, and that the Rohingya’s roots in Arakan state go back centuries.

Rumours circulated in Rangoon today that a protest would be held outside the British embassy over the BBC report, although except for a number of local and foreign journalists, little appeared to happen. Jeremy Hodges, deputy head of mission at the embassy, told DVB that he had made himself available to accept any petition that may have been circulated among protestors, but that nothing was in sight.

Rohingya are singled out for preferential treatment by groups like the International Organisation for Migration, and that money is given to them at the expense of other Arakanese, but we feel this is a misconception,” he said.

Unlike many Arakanese, Rohingya are prevented from travelling freely outside of specially-designated zones, and are often subject to racial and religious persecution. Up to 400,000 are living as refugees in neighbouring Bangladesh, having fled decades of maltreatment at the hands of the military and local civilians.

An article last week on the New Mandala blog, run by academics from the Australia National University, said the cries of protest were somewhat hypocritical. “…although Arakan ethnic members very often talk against majority ethnic Bur-mans (or Bamar) for what they call the ‘colonization of Arakan’ ‘Burmanization’ and Burmese chauvinism, they now mobilize the entire Burmese population against Rohingyas to ‘protect Burma and its national races’.”

Among critics of the Rohingya are high-profile Burmese, including Berlin-based historian Khin Maung Saw, whose paper, “Islamization of Burma Through Chittagonian Bengalis as ‘Rohingya Refugees’, triggered angry responses.

Widespread anger was also vented at current Burmese ambassador to the UN, Ye Myint Aung. During his tenure as Consul-General to Hong Kong, he wrote in a letter to other heads of mission, and copying in international newspapers, that Burma’s ethnic Rohingya were “ugly as ogres”.

On Saturday, October 29, 2011 BBC replied News Online Complaints as below: Thank you for your comments. The map was not intended as an exclusive look at every minority group in Burma. Rather it was intended to flag up minority peoples in Burma’s border regions who are prominent because they are engaged in either disputes or conflict with the Burmese government.

The line linking the Rohingya to Arakan state was not intended to imply ownership of the state or to marginalize the Rakhine people, but simply to the readers the state in which Rohingya live. The text linked to the image of the Rohingya makes it clear that they are not granted Burmese citizenship. We have now adjusted the line on our map to give a clearer picture of where the Rohingya are to be found. We have also added a section featuring the Rakhine people.

Thank you for reading the BBC News website. Regards/ BBC News Website. ##
In recent months, series of anti-Rohingya campaigns have been launched inside and outside of Burma. To the surprise of everyone, inflammatory writings are often posted on a few websites, face books and blogs that reveal deep-seated ill-will against the peace loving Rohingyas.

Propaganda against Rohingyas has long been launched by the Burmese military dictatorship with some Rakhine intellectuals and politicians. Now it reached the new quasi-military government's highest political institution, the parliament in Naypyidaw. The regime and xenophobes denied the existence of Rohingyas as an ethnic group and alleged that Rohingyas are illegal Bengalis entered into Arakan from Bangladesh. This concocted propaganda was met with strong condemnation from Rohingyas communities worldwide. There were global protests in front of the Burmese embassies on 15 September 2011. The protest rally held in London was joined by leaders and activists belonging to almost all Burma ethnic groups and democracy movements, some local supporters and NGOs. Speakers emphasised that the Rohingyas are a part of the Burma's society, and identified that they are worst victims of human rights violations.

**Why is this anti-Rohingya propaganda?**

The propaganda against Rohingyas is an undemocratic campaign. The intention behind is to deny the Rohingyas of their rights and freedom -- their ethnic rights and citizenship rights. For the regime it is (i) to divert the minds of the Burmese people away from the current political stalemate and ongoing civil war, where chemical weapons were used against the Kachin people, causing outflows of refugees and grave humanitarian crisis; (ii) to continue dividing the two sister communities of Rohingyas and Rakhine on cultural and religious lines. For the Rakhines, it is an opportunity to make a clean sweep of the Rohingyas, using the state oppressive apparatus, for their exclusive ownership of Arakan without Muslims, in line with their popular slogans. *Arakan is for Rakhine; Rakhine and Buddhism are synonymous*. Few misguided people are seemed to have been allured to the anti-Rohingya trap.

Upon knowing the Thein Sein government’s hostile attitude towards Rohingyas, the Rakhines backed by the Rakhine National Democratic Party (RNDP) organized anti-Rohingya meetings in the cities of Rangoon and Akyab and some towns in Arakan preachers extreme hatred against the Rohingyas. They warned that the Rohingyas have no rights to use the words Arakan/Arakanese for them. About 16 Rakhines had, on 16 November 2011, protested in front of the BBC in London demanding apology from BBC for suitably spotting the Rohingyas as an ethnic group in Arakan in a report with a map, made in October 2010, by its reporter Anna Jone. Why this protest after nearly a year of its publication! It was due to the government’s intimidating attitude and instigation of some Rakhine xenophobic academics and leaders. One wonders whether similar protests would be made against UN, USA, U.K. and E.U. for their use of the word “Rohingya” for Muslim Arakanese.

It is almost seven decades now (from 1942) the extremist Rakhines are harping on the tune of Muslim extermination prompting state terrorism. Half of their population have either been expelled or have had to leave their homeland for their lives. Despite colossal damages in terms of human lives, properties and civilization, the Muslim Rohingyas are still living site by site with their Rakhine compatriots.

**Anti-Rohingya propaganda is like a boomerang**

Misinformation and actions against Rohingyas recoil on the regime, particularly when it claims to have been taking measures for political and democratic reforms, although until now very little change is done. The international community will continue identifying the regime committing crimes against humanity. Similarly the extremist Rakhines will be branded as non-state actors committing international crimes. Their fanatical patriotism is a contributing factor to the government’s violence, chaos and lawlessness in the country. It is really shame and shame to speak of democracy without practice. In a democratic society, there is no room for discrimination, exploitation, social injustice, the degrading concept of ‘prime nation’ and ‘sub-nation’, on ground of race, religion, colour, culture and political opinion.

The word ‘Rohingya’

Like former military regimes, U Thein Sein government has blacklisted the word “Rohingya” in Burma. It might want to appease Rakhines under the policy of “divide and rule”. It might also be due in part to the influence of xenophobic Rakhine politicians and academics. However, the analysts say that it is a necessary evil for the dictatorship to make the Rohingyas scapegoats. They lied that the word “Rohingya” is nonexistent, unheard and a creation of Mujahids (Muslim rebels) and/or Rohingyas leaders in 1951. When the name ‘Rohingya’ is substantiated with historical evidence, the imposters, who include U Khin Maung Saw of Berlin, start arguing without shame that ‘Rohingya’ is the other name of Rakhine as it derived from ‘Rohang’, a Bengali name for Arakan.”

But Dr. Michael W. Charney, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, writes, “The earliest recorded use of an ethnonym immediately recognizable as Rohingya is an observation by Francis Buchanan in 1799. As he explains, a dialect that was derived from Hindi …is that spoken by the Mohammedans, who have long been settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Roainga, or native of Arakan”. He further mentions, “it can be asserted, however, that one claim of the Buddhist school in Rakhinae cartography, that Rohingya was an invention of the colonial period, is contradicted by the evidence.”

Thus, the word “Rohingya” was not coined but a historical name for Muslims of Arakan. There is still Muslim village in Akyab (Sittwe) city by the name of Rohingya Para.

**Unknown is the word ‘Arakan’ for its people**

Arakan is the name of the country, not the name of its people. Accordingly, unknown is the word Arakan for its people. But now Rakhines are calling themselves also Arakan, which is a distortion never in use before. Arakan is a place name; and it belongs to all its peoples. Its two major communities of Rohingyas and Rakhines are to be called as “Rohingya Arakanese” and “Rakhine Arakanese” when attributing the name of their homeland to their respective names.

**Muslim rule in Arakan**

Muslims played the phenomenal role of kingmakers in Arakan. Its heyday began with the spread of Islamic civilization. “Islam spread and deeply rooted in Arakan since 8th century from where it further spread into interior Burma”.

In fact, “Arakan was virtually ruled by Muslims from 1430 to 1531” to the extent that it was turned into a sultanate. Arakan was depicted as an Islamic State in the map of The Times Complete History of the World, showing cultural division of Southeast Asia (distribution of major religions) in 1500. (Edited by Richard Overy, eighth edition 2010, page 148.). These are enough evidences that the Muslims or Rohingyas are indigenous to Arakan.

**Acceptance of Rohingya as an ethnic nationality**

On the basis of the historical evidence, the Rohingyas as an ethnic group was recognized by the parliamentary government that ruled Burma from independence in 1948 to 1958 and 1960 to 1962, which stated, “The Rohingya is as the same par in the status of nationality with...”
Rakhine and Shan. As such, together with other ethnic nationalities of the country, the Rohingya representatives participated as state guests in the Union Day Celebration held in Rangoon on 12 February every year.

Before the Rakhine language was put in the programme, the Rohingya language was relayed trice a week from the indigenous language programme of the official Burma Broadcasting Service, Rangoon, from 15 May 1961 to 30 October 1965 that is, nearly four years further beyond the seizure of power by Gen. Ne Win. The Rangoon University Rohingya Students Association was one of the many ethnic student associations that functioned from 1959 to 1961 under the registration numbers 113/99 December 1959 and 7/60 September 1960 respectively. In official Myanmar Encyclopaedia Vol.9, 1964, pages 99/90 the historic narration was given in detail concerning Rohingya while affirming that 75% of the population in Arakan, and Mayu Frontier is Rohingya. In the map of the High School Geography, published in BSPP period, giving the distribution of national races in Burma, northern Arakan is spotted as a region of Rohingya national races in Burma, Similarly good oppositions or political parties have moral obligation to look into it. To this concern we earnestly invite the attention of Burma’s democracy icon and the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Daw Suu may be aware that the Rohingya people have been supporting NLD with a high expectation on her.

Alleged terrorist links, a conspiracy against Rohingya

It is paradoxical to accuse the Rohingya organizations and freedom fighters to have link with terrorist organizations. The sources they have referred to include SLORC/SPDC; and they are highly controversial as they are largely unsubstantiated. They are simply guesswork to hoodwink the international community to serve the interests of the Burmese regime and vested interest groups.

It is important to take cognizance of the actual situation of the Rohingya people, who are victims of state terrorism. Their movement is a struggle for their survival and existence with human dignity and rights. It is not the case afresh, and again condemned terrorism of any forms and declared that they were (and are) not part of any other movement(s) or group(s) outside of Burma. In spite of that, for being Muslims, the regime and vested interest groups are trying to stain them to have link with terrorist groups or terrorism particularly after 11 September.

The human rights violations against the Rohingyas are systematic, persistent and widespread that amount to crimes against humanity. Despite this, can anyone cite a single example that the Rohingyas ever did any excess, wrong and injustice in Burma? Rohingyas organizations are dead against narcotic trade and any activities causing instability in the region. But they are made scapegoats. It requires in-depth study before anyone is writing on Rohingya who are dying alive only because of their religion and ethnicity.

Muslims did not claim ‘Rohingya’ before Burma independence, why?

There is an argument posed specially by some Rakhines, “why the Muslims of Arakan did not call themselves Rohingya before and during Burmese independence”. The answer is simple and pure. During independence period, the Rohingya offered an olive branch to fellow Rakhines and tried to develop an integrated political culture, based on the common national aspiration of “Arakaneness”, through rapprochement with the spirit of “Rohingya Rakhine Bhai Bhai” or “Rohingya Rakhine Twin brothers.” But the Rakhine politicians were not receptive to the proposal. They claimed that Arakanese and Buddhism are synonymous and the Muslims or Rohingya are outsiders. By bad luck, the extremists among them preferred to serve as the instrument of Rohingya oppression. This terrible predicament, arising out of the ‘policy of exclusiveness’ of the Rakhine, called for the use of their exclusive ethnic name “Rohingya” in order to protect their legitimate rights and privileges. They cannot be blamed or deprived of their historically inherent ethnic name “Rohingya” for not claiming it at a given time in the interest of solidarity and peaceful coexistence among the peoples of Arakan.

Last Words:
The Rohingya with a long history in Arakan are an integral part of Burma’s society. They are peace-loving; yet they are not tolerated and are persecuted in Burma for their religion and ethnicity. Rohingyas are living together with their Rakhine compatriots in the same place, drinking the same water and breathing the same air. There is no reason to be antagonistic to each other; it will damage both Rohingya and Rakhine, and their children. Unless both peoples cultivate a political will to change this miserable condition, they are bound to end up with humiliation in the abyss of their history. Let us revive our traditional relationship for the future of our succeeding generations. Let us work together on democratic principles with mutual respect, love and affection. This is the only way to salvation!

Notes and References:-
**BGB ARRESTS 16 BOAT-PEOPLE, 33 PUSHED BACK TO BURMA**

Monday, 21 November 2011, KALADAN NEWS

Teknaf, Bangladesh: Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested 16 boat-people while going to Malaysia with rickety engine boat from Shapuri Dip and another 33 Rohingyas - arrested from Whaikong BGB check-post - were pushed back to Burma on November 19, according to BGB official statement.

"Among the arrested 16 boat-people are seven Rohingya and nine Bangladeshis. BGB of Shapuri Dip, outpost camp seized a boat with suspected from the Shapuri Dip jetty which was boarding some people who were coming from Burma and waiting some people who will come from Cox’s Bazar and local Shapuri Dip to join the trip at noon."

The owner of the boat is Ismail, son of Haji Salay, hailed from Barmay Para of Shapuri Dip, said a fisherman from Shapuri Dip. Most of the engine-boats were going to Malaysia after getting understanding among Dalals (agents), local BGB members and Coast Guards, otherwise, the boat-people will be arrested, said a local elder from Shapuri Dip who denied to be named. "The well-known agents from Shapuri Dip are:- Dolu Hussain, Mozi Bullah, Monna, Shaker, Amin, Shobbir, Kana Jaffar, Kobira, Jaffar, Rejaul Karim, Nurul Alam, Rahim Ullah Younous, Nazir Ahmed Bulu, Amin."

Besides, on November 18, at night, three agents were arrested including Nurul Islam and Belal by police from Nonna Sara of Cox’s Bazar while preparing to board on some boat-people into an engine trawler. But, nearly 40 persons were fled after sensing the presence of police and coast-guard. It is learnt that it will go to Shapuri Dip for boarding boat-people after boarding people from Cox’s Bazar. Most of the people are Rohingya refugees, said SI of Cox’s Bazar police station.

Abdullah (36) – a refugee - son of Abdul Amin from D-2 Block of Kutupalong camp was arrested with suspicion and released after interrogation for not involving in the human trafficking, said Zahirul Islam, an officer of Coast Guard. Police super (Model cycle) of Cox’s Bazar Saidy Tofayel Ahmed confirmed the incident. It is a suitable time for the boat-people as the sea is calm in winter, so that boat-people can go easily to Malaysia by sea route, said a trader from Shapuri Dip. ##

**US BASED ROHINGYA DELEGATION PARTICIPATES IN CONFERENCE ON BURMA IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

November 16, 2011, West Coast, USA

The Director General of Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU), Prof. Dr. Wakar Uddin, and the Co-founder of Free Rohingya Campaign, Nay San Oo, attended the Conference on Burma titled “China-Myanmar Relations: The Dilemma of Mutual Dependence” in early November, at the Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. The conference consisted four different Panel Sessions, and the Panel Session II focused on the minority issues titled “Myanmar/Minority Perspectives”.

A significant component of this session covered the minority issues in the eastern frontier regions of Burma; however, Rohingya issue in the western frontier also captured the attention from the audience and the panel when ARU Director General Prof. Dr. Wakar Uddin raised human rights and citizenship issues faced by the Rohingya ethnic minority in Arakan State in Burma. Dr. Uddin specifically directed his questions to Tom Kramer of Transnational Institute who addressed the Rohingya issues at a great length based on his experiences in Burma.

Addressing Dr. Uddin’s questions about the plows by the ultra-racist Rakhine National Democratic Party (RNDP) to discredit the Rohingya parliamentarians and RNDP’s hostile moves against Rohingya ethnic minority, Mr. Kramer provided transparent and in-depth assessments of the post-election situation in Rohingya regions in Northern Arakan. Mr. Kramer’s assessment accurately reflected the rapidly deteriorating situation in Arakan. The reports of RNDP’s approach to some major ethnic parties to form an alliance was discussed in Panel Session II that substantiate the earlier reports of anti-Rohingya maneuvering of the radical RNDP in Arakan and Naypyitaw at a high level.

**47 ROHINGYAS PUSHED BACK TO BURMA**

Thursday, 24 November 2011 Kaladan News

Teknaf, Bangladesh: The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested 47 Rohingyas on November 21 at several border points. All were sent back to Burma the same day at about 2:00 pm, according to a BGB official.

“The BGB arrested the Rohingyas between Shapuri Dip and Taungbro as they entered Bangladesh for a variety of reasons. They arrested 17 Rohingyas in the Nayapa area, 8 in the Dum Dum Meah area, 21 at Zeman Khali and 1 at Shapuri Dip, in total 47 members,” the official said.

The BGB has increased its border patrols. Rohingya people are frequently caught and sent back to Burma, said a local elder from border area who didn’t give a name.

The Whaikong BGB also seized medicine valued at roughly Taka 361,500 being smuggled through the border to Bangladesh from Burma, the BGB official stated.

The BGB also seized about 1,000 yaba tablets on Teknaf—Cox’s Bazar road. The drugs originated in Arakan State, Burma. This information was confirmed by the 42 BGB Battalion Commander, Lt. Col Zahid Hassan of Teknaf. ##
THE ROHINGYAS AND THEIR HISTORIC RIGHTS IN ARAKAN

By Amanullah

In recent months, series of anti-Rohingya campaigns afloat inside and outside of Burma. To the surprise of everyone, inflammatory writings are often posted on a few websites, face books and blogs that reveal deep-seated ill-will against the peace-loving Rohingya.

Even they have held seminars and protest meetings in various places to protest the use of the term “Arakan” by Rohingyas, a term which is, according to Professor S H Hodivala, the great numismatics of India, said to be derived from the Arabic word “Al-Rakkang” (SH Hodivala, History of Indian Muslim” New Delhi: 1992, P-59).

Arakan, with a population of diverse, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious identities, is the name of a land. Arakan belongs to All Arakanese peoples including Rohingyas those who have historically lived in Arakan.

Across the last two thousand years, there has been great deal of local vibrancy as well as movement of different ethnic peoples through the region. For the last millennium or so, Muslims (Rohingyas) and Buddhists (Rakhines) have historically lived on both side of Naaf land. Arakan belongs to All Arakanese Buddhist. Australoid, Mongoloid and other elements tribes of various ethnic origins, such as.

The Muslims (Rohingyas) and Buddhists (Rakhines) had been peacefully coexisting in Arakan over the centuries. Unfortunately, the relation between those two sister communities began to grow bitter at instigation of the third parties, during the long colonial rule of more than two centuries. The anti-Muslim pogrom of 1942 — in which about 100,000 Rohingyas were massacred, 50,000 of them were driven across the border to the east Bengal some parts of Muslim settlements were devastated — have caused rapid deterioration in their relation.

Today, the greater number of Rakhines, under the patronization of the successive regime, is hostile to Rohingyas. They are main instruments of Rohingya oppression over the decades. Even many Rakhines today claim Arakan to be the ‘historic land of Rakhine Buddhists’. Denying the existence of Rohingya, they state that Arakan belongs to them alone and the Rohingyas have nothing to do with it and have no right to use the word ‘Arakan’.

It is not possible to scribe to Rakhines an “historic right”, the right of first occupier. The Arakanese chronicles recorded a line of kings reaching back to year 2666 BC. More certain is the Kingdom of Dannya Waddy (Dhannovati), which flourished at the beginning of Christian era. Many modern scholars including U Aung Tha Oo and U San Tha Aung believes that the Rakhines were Ayans who came from the west.

Brahmanical and Buddhist culture together an influx of Aryans speakers arrived in this area, in the early centuries of Christian era. So the people in the kingdom of Dannya Waddy were not Aryans stocks. They might have been Proto-Australoid people like that of Bengal or Negrito group of Neolithic descendants. The pre-Aryan peoples are the real Adivasis (aboriginal) of this area. They were not only the first occupants of the land and had been there for thousand years until the Aryans and other peoples come. Archaeological remains, many historical and numismatics evidence confirms that the earlier Arakanese dynasties are thought to have been Indian, ruling over population similar to that of Bengal.

Arab traders were close contact with the people as early as 788 AD and that they introduced the religious of Islam there in as early as that time. Many these Arabs settled in Arakan. In the 8th century AD some Buddhists from Magadha in north and northeastern India escaped persecution of Hindu revivalism and took shelter in Chittagong and Arakan region.

History does not help us in forming an idea of Burmese infiltration into Arakan before 11th century AD. Hall and others described the Araknese (Rakhines) of University of London, writes, "The earliest recorded use of an ethnonyms immediately recognizable as Rohingya is an observation by Francis Buchanan in 1799. As he explains, a dialect that was derived from Hindi ...is that spoken by the Mohammadans, who have long been settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Roainga, or native of Arakan.”

With the passage of time, there come to exist two distinct and compact communities of Rohingyas and Rakhines in Arakan out of those heterogeneous races and tribes and are thus equally entitled to similar historic rights. Both are indigenous people characterized by objective criteria, such as historical continuity, and subjective factors including self-identification which need to define an indigenous people and to have the right of self-determination. It means that, if Rakhines have historic rights in Arakan the Rohingyas have also the same right in Arakan. If the Rakhines freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development, the Rohingyas have also the same rights to charter their destiny by their free will, by virtue of their rights to self-determination. ##
DHAKA, NOVEMBER 10, 2011: Bangladesh is likely to call upon the Burmese government to redefine the Bangladesh-Burma Border Agreement-1939 and the boundary pact of 1966 during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s visit to Burma. Revisiting the two border agreements has become necessary in order to check trans-border crimes, push back Rohingyas (Burmese citizens) illegally living on Bangladeshi soil and curb smuggling of arms, drugs and other contrabands into Bangladesh from Burma.

Prime Minister Hasina, also president of ruling party Awami League, who is scheduled to visit Burma for the first time during December 5-7, is expected to request her Burmese counterpart to take back the Rohingyas from Bangladesh, said sources in the ministries of home and foreign affairs.

The premier is likely to call upon the Burmese government to stop military concentration and manoeuvres on its border with Bangladesh with a view to defusing tensions, sources added. A high official of the home ministry told The Independent that some vexed issues were likely to be resolved if the two governments redefined the two pacts.

During her visit, Hasina is likely to request her counterpart to see that regular meetings are held between the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and NASAKA, the Burmese border force, to resolve border issues, he said. The director general (DG) of BGB, Major General Anwar Hussain, told The Independent that DG-level, mid-level and lower-level meetings should be held every year between BGB and NAKASA to contain cross-border terrorism, and thus increase the quantum of trust and confidence between the border forces of the two countries.

According to the sources, as part of confidence-building measures, Bangladesh should prevail upon the DG of NAKASA to resolve the problem of Bangladeshi fishermen being apprehended in the waters of the Bay and the river Naaf while fishing. The authorities are also likely to ask Myanmar to take back Burmese nationals, who were arrested by the Bangladesh law enforcers while illegally entering the country, and those who were convicted and have completed their prison terms in various Bangladeshi jails.

The sources said the maritime standoff between Bangladesh and Burma, over the natural gas-rich patch of the Bay of Bengal within Bangladesh’s territorial waters, might prove to be a tough nut to crack.

The sources also said an international network was trying to pressurize the government to register as refugees the Rohingyas illegally entering the country. Some donor agencies, including the EU, also advised the government to accord the refugee status to the new Rohingyas.

Certain foreign and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are working in the country in the name of assisting the Rohingya refugees, the sources added.

There are allegations that a section of officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) are encouraging Rohingyas to enter the country.

For decades, the government has been grappling with the Rohingya problem as tens of thousands of Rohingyas, who spread over different parts of Cox’s Bazar district after they had entered Bangladesh, now refuse to return to their homeland.

The Rohingyas, who are Muslims, try to cross over to Bangladesh to flee persecution whenever the Burmese government puts pressure on them, or creates adverse conditions of living by forcibly acquiring their farmlands and even homesteads.

The flow of Rohingyas into the country will not stop unless Myanmar settles the problems,“ a BGB officer said. The military Junta of Myanmar recently acquired over 1,000 acres of land belonging to Rohingya families in 50 villages and evicted them from their native places, reports reaching here from across the border said adding, the lands were later redistributed among some other people.

Earlier, foreign minister Dr Dipu Moni had said the Rohingya problem had been lingering for over 30 years and Burma must take steps to resolve it. “We hope Burma will do the needful to keep its people within its territory,” she said.

Sources in the relief ministry say there are 35,329 Rohingyas living in registered Rohingya camps at Nayapara in Teknaf, Kutupalong in Ukhiya and Leda in Teknaf. These people are unwilling to go back fearing persecution by the Junta. There are another 2,85,329 Rohingyas illegally living in different areas of Cox’s Bazar and Bandarban districts. They are the remnants of some 2,50,877 Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh in 1991-92. Of them, 2,36,599 were repatriated through the UNHCR within 2005. Local people of Cox’s Bazar say more than 5,00,000 Rohingyas live outside the camps; they can easily mingle with local people as they speak an almost identical language.

Source: The Independent, Dhaka. ##
CLINTON'S VISIT OPENED A NEW CHAPTER IN US-BURMA RELATIONS  BY AMAN ULLAH

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton’s state visit to Burma on November 30, 2011 opened a new chapter in US-Burma relations. Clinton is the first US top-level official to visit Burma in more than half a century and seeking to encourage a “movement for change” in one of the most closed nations of the world.

Just prior to leaving South Korea, the US Secretary of State told reporters in South Korea that she is cautiously optimistic about the tentative reforms shown and she wanted to see for herself how committed the government was to change.

“We and many other nations are quite hopeful that these flickers of progress… will be ignited into a movement for change that will benefit the people of the country,” she said. She is due to meet Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and President Thein Sein on her three-day visit.

Clinton has said she will insist that Burma free all political prisoners — activists’ estimates vary between 500 and more than 1,600 — and move to end long-running ethnic conflicts that have displaced thousands of people. During her visit, Clinton will also encourage Myanmar to sever military and nuclear ties with North Korea.

Daw Suu Kyi has welcomed Clinton’s trip and told Obama in a phone call earlier this month that engagement with the government would be positive. Clinton has called Suu Kyi a personal inspiration. Suu Kyi said Wednesday that she still supports U.S. sanctions against her country’s government, but will have a better idea of the chances for reform after she meets with Clinton.

The trip is the first major development in US-Myanmar relations in decades and comes after what Obama described to as “flickers of progress” in Burma — a reference to the series of reforms and policy decisions taken since the military government stood aside in March. The Obama administration launched a new effort to prod reforms in 2009 with a package of carrot-and-stick incentives. Following the Burmese military's brutal crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations in the summer of 1988, the US downgraded its head of mission in Burma from ambassador level to chargé d'affaires.

The US also imposed different economic sanctions against the Burmese regime in 1997, 2003, 2007 and 2008 as well as banning high level official visits to Burma. However, in 2008 the White House and U.S lawmakers decided to use both sanctions and engagement to achieve change in Burma. A special representative and policy coordinator to Burma, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Derek Mitchell, was appointed on Aug. 15.

A leaked US diplomatic cable dated Feb. 9, 2009, claimed that this new tactic was bearing fruit as, “the most senior generals are looking for an escape strategy … they hate being subject to sanctions and want to be treated with the respect accorded to other world leaders. “Senior generals are getting old and want assurances that, if they voluntarily step aside, they and their families will retain their assets and not be prosecuted,” the cable continued.

And the Burmese regime has noticeably been attempting to develop good relations with Washington in recent years, including welcoming US officials such as Derek Mitchell, Senator John McCain, Senator Jim Webb and other senior state department figures to the country.

One senior official accompanying Clinton on the trip described the administration’s early efforts as “abysmal failures” but said the situation had improved notably in recent months. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss the administration’s internal thinking.

The rapprochement sped up when Myanmar held elections last year that gave power to a new government that pledged greater openness. The administration’s special envoy to Myanmar has made three trips to the country in the past three months, and the top U.S. diplomat for human rights has made one. Those officials pushed for Clinton to make the trip, deeming a test of the reforms as worthwhile despite the risks of backsliding.

There is a good reason to be cautiously optimistic on the recent developments in Burma. As President Obama stated, there have been “flickers of progress” in the past few weeks. The greater question now is whether the Burmese government has a genuine intention to achieve true democracy and national reconciliation.

However, President Thein Sein has not changed the Burmese army’s actions against the country’s ethnic minority civilians nor released all political prisoners. In the past seven months there has been a serious up tick in human rights violations committed by the Burmese army, including the largest forced displacement in a decade of over 100,000 new internally displaced persons, renewed armed conflict with 3 separate decades old ethnic ceasefire groups, an increase in the use of rape as a weapon of war, forced labor, torture, extrajudicial killings and the use of human shields.

Moreover, the Burmese Military continues its brutal attacks on Christian churches in Chin minority areas in Kachin State, as it also has in Karen, Karenni, and Naga areas. Rohingya Muslims continue to face severe discrimination and restrictions on their religious activity, causing large refugee problems in Bangladesh and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Hundreds of Buddhist monks, such as U Gambira, continue to serve long sentences.

Justice is a crucial part of national reconciliation in any country. Burma cannot move forward until these attacks stop and the rule of law are realized. While the reconciliation between NLD and USDP is an important step, emphasis must now be given to the fundamental political problem. Democracy for all majority group alone cannot solve Burma’s political impregnable.

Several decades of military operations have been unable to solve Burma’s minority problems. The most viable way to integrate ethnic minorities is to end military offensives against them and begin a political dialogue based on mutual respect and a constitutional guarantee of equality for all citizens.

The US should continue to set benchmarks for normalizing relations with the Burmese government. Naypyidaw’s commitment to democratization needs to be irreversible and should be demonstrated by releasing all remaining political prisoners; the government must be able to tolerate political dissent and respect the rights of every citizen to express opinions without fear.

The Secretary should prioritize seeking an end to the Burmese regime’s systematic and widespread use of rape as a weapon of war, forced labor, forced relocation, torture, extrajudicial killings, child soldiers and use of human shields and the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners.

Only when the country’s minority problems are resolved can there be an end to over six decades of political conflict in Burma. The advantage the US government has on Burma is crucial for national reconciliation.

It is also very crucial to encourage Burma’s authorities to realize the international community’s longstanding call for a tri-partite dialogue between the regime, Aung San Suu Kyi, and ethnic nationality leaders. Without a concerted high-level engagement that includes Burma’s ethnic minorities, any hopes for true democratic reform will not materialize. ##

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BANGLADESH URGES UNHCR TO HELP REPATRIATE ROHINGYA REFUGEES FROM BANGLADESH

Dhaka, November 20, 2011: Ms. Janet Lim, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Called on Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni on 20 November 2011 in the evening. The Bangladesh Foreign Minister urged the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner to take effective steps to repatriate Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh, according to a Press Release.

The Foreign Minister also appreciated the humanitarian and institutional roles played by the UNHCR in protecting and supporting refugees around the world as well as in their voluntary repatriation, reintegration and resettlement in a third country.

Foreign Minister commended UNHCR, which has long been associated with Bangladesh from even before independence in facilitating the return of ten million Bengalees, who were forced to flee their homes during the War of Liberation in 1971.

She stated that, as a principled position, Bangladesh had never pursued forced repatriation of Rohingya refugees. Accordingly, Bangladesh authorities have been working closely with the UNHCR in voluntary repatriation of the 'Rohingya' refugees through diplomatic negotiations with Burma, the country of origin of the refugees.

Currently 25,045 registered refugees are residing in the two camps at Kutupalong and Noyapara awaiting repatriation back to Bangladesh or elsewhere.

Out of these refugees, and Noyapara awaiting repatriation back to are residing in the two camps at Kutupalong.

There are currently 25,045 registered refugees in Bangladesh. "Although Bangladesh is a poor country, it has been continuing its assistance to the Rohingyas, for humanitarian reasons, he said." Janet Lim requested the Bangladesh government to take steps to ensure nutritional levels of the Rohingyas who were sheltering in Bangladesh.

According to one group of refugees, "We will go back to our motherland if the Burmese authorities give us citizenship with ethnicity and the same rights as other ethnic groups."

One Rohingya politician, speaking on condition of anonymity, claimed that if the Burmese authorities did not grant full citizenship with ethnicity and equal rights to the Rohingya refugees, the refugees would never go back to Burma.

The politician also said, “We fled to Bangladesh from Burma because of persecution and human rights abuses committed by the military regime. We will not jump right back into the same system of abuse by the government. We would rather die in Bangladesh or elsewhere.”

Earlier, Deputy Director General (Operations) of Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Manoj Juneja called on Dipu Moni. The minister underlined the need for effective research in crop varieties so that the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities could be reduced.

Thousands of Rohingya refugees facing starvation in Bangladesh

BANGLADESH URGES UNHCR TO HELP REPATRIATE ROHINGYA REFUGEES FROM BANGLADESH

Dr. Razzaque also noted that hosting the Rohingya population had placed an extra burden upon densely populated Bangladesh. “Although Bangladesh is a poor country, it has been continuing its assistance to the Rohingyas, for humanitarian reasons, he said.” Janet Lim requested the Bangladesh government to take steps to ensure nutritional levels of the Rohingyas who were sheltering in Bangladesh.

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BANGLADESH URGES UNHCR TO HELP REPATRIATE ROHINGYA REFUGEES FROM BANGLADESH

Charges Against Fugitive Burmese Gen. Nyi Win

BY A CORRESPONDENT

On 30 November 2011, Hillary Clinton arrived in Burma for a three-day visit. It was the first visit by a US Secretary of State for over 50 years. During the visit, Clinton met President Thein Sein in Naypyidaw and had two meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon.

Before the visit, President Obama said in a statement that “after years of darkness, we’ve seen flickers of progress in these last several weeks. President Thein Sein and the Burmese Parliament have taken important steps on the path toward reform. “Of course, there’s far more to be done. We remain concerned about Burma’s closed political system, its treatment of minorities and holding of political prisoners, and its relationship with North Korea.” Hillary Clinton also welcomed the steps the government has taken and announced a series of initiatives the US would take to encourage further reforms, including support for UN health and microfinance projects.

However, she warned that the government needs to go much further if they want to see sanctions lifted, including the release of all political prisoners and a peace and reconciliation process to bring to an end to ethnic conflicts.

Speaking to reporters, she said, “While measures already taken may be unprecedented and certainly welcome, they are just a beginning. We’re not at the point yet where we can consider lifting sanctions that we have in place because of our ongoing concerns about policies that have to be reversed. But any steps that the government takes will be carefully considered and will be matched. “We are prepared to go further if reforms maintain momentum. But history teaches us to be cautious. We know that there have been serious setbacks and grave disappointments over the past decades.”

After meeting Hillary Clinton, Aung San Suu Kyi said “If we go forward together, I’m confident there will be no turning back from the road to democracy. We are not on that road yet, but we hope to get there as soon as possible with our friends.”
Phuket, Thursday, November 24, 2011.

A boat containing 92 Rohingya was apprehended near the fishing port of Kuraburi, north of Phuket, about noon on 24 November 2011. The men and boys came ashore in Thailand and were handed over immediately to the Thai Army, raising concerns about whether the group will be treated appropriately under international conventions.

It's the first boatpeople vessel to be confirmed as arriving in Thailand under the new administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. The Government's policy on Rohingya has yet to be made clear.

Today's immediate transfer of the 92 Rohingya from Border Patrol Police into the hands of the Thai Army revived memories of the reprehensible "push-backs" of 2008-2009, when the Thai military and paramilitary detained Rohingya in secret on an island north of Kuraburi before setting large groups adrift at sea with little food and water.

Hundreds died before survivors reached Indonesia and India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, as revealed at the time in Indonesia and India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, as revealed at the time in Phuketwan and the Hong Kong newspaper, the South China Morning Post.

Today the Rohingya came ashore near the village of Tung Laong on the mainland in Phang Nga province, about three hours' drive north of Phuket. Authorities were quickly notified. It is believed the group was to be trucked north to the Thai-Burma border port of Ranong, where the Army has a large base.

It is from a village near the base that Rohingya were transported into secret detention on the island of Sai Daeng in 2008-2009. Usually, illegal arrivals in Thailand are handed over to Immigration authorities. This was the procedure with groups that landed in several boats on Phuket and in provinces further south during the 2010-2011 "sailing season," before the new government was elected.

Rohingya choose to chance their luck with people-traffickers between November and April when conditions in the monsoon-prone Andaman Sea are tranquil. This coming "sailing season" is expected to see many boats put to the water because of Rohingya disillusionment over the new, supposedly more liberal approach in Burma. While some reforms appear to be evident in the former pariah state, the repression of the outcast Muslims, who are deprived of citizenship, is not going to change. The new Burmese government has now revealed in the new Parliament that its policy towards the Rohingya remains as it was under the military junta.

Royal Thai Navy patrols attempt interceptions after traffickers sell berths and the boats put to sea from northern Burma, or neighbouring Bangladesh. The Navy applies a "help on" credo, offering food, fuel and medical treatment if necessary, and assisting the boats on towards Muslim Malaysia, which for many is the preferred destination.

While the whole South East Asian region and India was alarmed by the treatment of the Rohingya in 2009, ASEAN has fallen silent on the issue with the recent decision to allow the "new" Burma to chair the organisation in 2014. Aid groups suspect that passengers on any Rohingya boats that land in Thailand before reaching Malaysia may be covertly handed back to the people smugglers.

Police Again Confirm Handover of 95 Rohingya Boat People to Army

On 26 November 2011, the Phuket Gazette reported that Police in Kuraburi, Phang Nga province, again have confirmed handover of 95 Rohingyas landed on the island of Koh Phra Thong on November 24, 2011 (Thursday) morning. The island lies in the Andaman sea about 110km north of Phuket.

"We received a call from local villagers on the island saying that a boat full of Rohingya people had landed on the shore there, but by the time I got there the Army was already there," Lt Col Akekachai Pueakmanee, Deputy Superintendent of Kuraburi Police Station, told the Phuket Gazette. "The Army had already assembled all 95 of them at the Tung Laong Pier on the mainland," he added. Lt Col Akekachai did not specify how many of the refugees were men, women or children. "An Army officer told us that all Rohingya of the 'captured' will be taken to the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 25th Military unit, Rattanarangson Camp, in Ratchakud District, Ranong province," he said. "I'm not sure if they will be sent to a third country or if they will remain in the camp," he added.

The Gazette was told to call the Thai-Burma Border Patrol Police headquarters in Surat Thani, which is responsible for border patrol in the area where the Rohingya landed. However, the officer the Gazette spoke with said he was unaware of the case and referred our reporter back to the police involved.

Lt Col Songsak Chanthep, who accompanied Lt Col Akekachai to Koh Phra Thong on Thursday, told us that, "The local villagers told me that Rohingya land on the shore of Koh Phra Thong every year. They seem to know that they will be safe if they make it to that spot," he said.

Where Are Boatpeople? Answers Wanted From Thai Govt.

Human Rights Watch is calling on the Government of Thailand to reveal the whereabouts of a boatload of would-be refugees and explain the Army's role in the unconventional apprehension and detention of the Rohingya group.

The 92 Rohingya waded ashore on the Thai mainland north of Phuket on Thursday and were last seen being trucked to an unknown destination. Locals were told the men and boys were headed for a Thai army base.

The deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, Phil Roberson, said on Nov.28 evening: "We are concerned by these reports and we would like the Govt. to clearly explain where these people are and what they plan to do with them."

It was a "worrisome development" to have the detention of illegal arrivals in Thailand once again removed from the Immigration authorities who usually handle such matters, he said. "Thailand needs to produce these people," Mr. Robertson said. "Trucking them off into the distance is no answer to this problem." The absence of information from the Thai Government was cause for "very serious concern. "Because the Rohingya do not have citizenship, they cannot be officially returned to Burma."

Fresh questions about Thailand's policy towards the Rohingya boatpeople are being raised as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton prepares for a history-making visit to Burma, where the Muslim minority is deprived of citizenship and driven to pay people traffickers to escape by sea.##

Sources: PHUKET WAN NEWS & PHUKET GAZETTE.
BOAT CAPSIZES IN BAY OF BENGAL, 17 ROHINGYA RESCUED AND 138 MISSING

Burmese Nasaka Force blocks villagers from picking up the dead bodies of Rohingya Boat People

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Teknaf, Bangladesh: The photo taken by a local man with a cell phone that was posted at Kaladan Press Network website is unmanly unthinkable. Seventeen Rohingya were rescued and approximately 138 were reportedly missing while a makeshift Rohingya refugee boat capsized in the Bay of Bengal during shade of the night on November 23, at night, according to an elder from Alaythankyaw in Maungdaw South, Kaladan Press reports. The worse amidst this is the Nasaka forces (Burmese Secret Police named as Border Security Force) letting the bodies that came ashore to deteriorate, and hounding the villagers who attempted to retrieve the bodies for proper burial.

“The boat capsized between Saint Martin and Shapuri Dip Island at the Bay of Bengal of Burma side. It wooden vessel was severely damaged after it hit the rock between Saint Martin and Shapuri Dip Island.” said an elder of Shapuri Dip.

The Burmese Border Security Force (Nasaka) and its collaborators boarded 155 Rohingya – 120 from Maungdaw Township and 35 from Buthidaung Township — after collecting 300,000 Kyat per person according to a school teacher from Maungdaw, Kaladan Press reports. Upon receiving the cash, the officer-in-charge at Donkhali (also known as Pa Yaunbang Gyi) Nasaka camp had allowed the group of Rohingya to board the boat stationed at the Nasaka camp. This corruption scandal reportedly involved Major Kyaw Aung, the Commander of Nasaka Area (Jurisdiction) # 7 according to a person associated with the Nasaka force.

The other known alleged Nasaka collaborators, Abul Kalam from Lamba Ghona village, Moslim from Dawn Khali village, and Yassin from Konna Para village, reportedly absconding as the news of the human smuggling quickly reached the higher authorities in Maungdaw District Headquarters who launched an inquiry to the mishap.

“The rescued 17 persons had quickly sent away by the Nasaka personnel to their respective villages to prevent the exposure of their involvement in the human trafficking. The Nasaka forced the rescued individuals to stay put in their villages,” an aide reported to Kaladan Press. The dead bodies floating in the Naf River are not allowed to collect and bury by their relatives and villagers. The dead bodies that came ashore were later collected by the Nasaka personnel and disposed at sea by fastening the bodies to large stones to eliminate the evidences of the entire event. The news leaked from some of the aides of Nasaka and the villagers. The grotesque human rights violations routinely committed by the Burmese Nasaka forces in the Rohingya regions in Arakan is not acceptable at any standard of human civilization on this planet. The atrocities by the Nasaka in Rohingya regions in Arakan have dramatically increased after the military’s election in 2010. Human rights violations in a number of ethnic areas in Burma are rampant; however, intensity and nature of crimes committed by Nasaka forces in Rohingya areas are the most inhumane as evidenced by this report and the graphic image.

The haunting images of the atrocities by Burmese Nasaka force in Rohingya areas in Arakan, Burma (Myanmar), will undoubtedly test the sensitivity by the international community to Rohingya genocide in the hands of Burmese government. The questions is, whether the message is not going through or just the international community is gradually becoming desensitized as it is getting used to the repeated horrific stories of Rohingya genocide. # # Source: Kaladan Press