More than two years back and now recently, Mr. Gambari an emissary of UN. Secretary-General Kofi Anan visited Burma to oversee the political process for reform that the Junta had promised. Nothing happened except that he was the only foreigner allowed to see the 61 years old, democrat icon, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Hopes were raised that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would be released. Kofi Anan himself made a personal appeal, there were other global calls and the Asean leaders also joined as her term of detention was about to expire. Contrary to all expectations, Daw Aung San Suu kyi’s detention was extended and she is now under house arrest for such a long period. It is in human. Detention of this kind, not withstanding her live- in maid, with no contact with outside world, amounts to solitary confinement. Even solitary confinement has limits set down by law. The Junta perhaps expects that she will become a mental case and forget her commitment to democracy. Its main enemy is being tackled and she will ever remain under pressure. The Junta can rule in perpetuity. Flagrant abuse of Rule of law is its benchmark. The visit of Mr. Gambari has to be seen in that context. Indisputably, there has been a major shift in the policy of Junta. Not only has the shifting of the Capital to Napidaw, but it’s series of actions in totality speak volume of how its mind is working. Its first task is to gag any dissent and take no chance in leaving them outside. The arrest of Min KO Naing and 8888 generation student leaders reveal how insecure it feels in spite of its guns and soldiers. It is going ahead with its National convention and the modest demands of the opposition to change its procedure have been rejected. It is rumored that Mr. Ganbari will be taken to the National Convention. The motive is to fool him about its transparency.

Mr. Gambari came for the second time to pressure the Junta for democratic reforms. UN General Secretary has urged Burma to show “tangible steps forward” on human rights, democratic reform and national reconciliation. The visit came at a criti-
cal time for Burma as the UN Security Council has held discussions on Burma in September, with U.S. pressing for a resolution on its human rights abuses and lack of reforms. Burma is on the Council agenda despite strong opposition from China and it is likely to come after Gambari’s visit.

A non-binding annual resolution is to be tabled before the General Assembly. It calls for independent access by UN representative to regions of concern and to carry on humanitarian programs. It also urged to take steps in “an inclusive and credible process of national reconciliation.” Burma’s ruling junta has ignored 28 previous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

Mr. Gambari’s task is most challenging. It has to hear the Junta but not put faith in what it says. Armed with his report after this visit, the Security Council can go ahead. U.S. has to neutralize China and see through a conflict resolving resolution and international intervention. Once the undercurrent of change is generated, people can take care of emerging situation so that Rule of Law returns to Burma.

She has spent 11 of the last 17 years in detention, mostly under house arrest. She met Mr. Gambari but no details of the meeting were made public. Only thing he said he was “Conveying a message from Sr. Gen. Than Shwe” to Mrs. Suu Kyi. The backdrop of the meeting must not be lost sight of the UN Security Council took the historic step of putting the country on its agenda in September, meaning that Burma’s ruling Junta is subject to greater UN Scrutiny. The U.S. plans to introduce a resolution on Burma to the Security Council after the Mr. Gambari’s visit. Gambari described his talks with Gen. Than Shwe as “good and constructive” whereas previous May meeting was characterized as”a polite and diplomatic.” The case was more of a “give and take.” Gambari was also allowed to meet NLD leaders, which is interesting. The question that arises is what “is give and take”? What has Sr. Gen. Than Shwe given to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to take? What has Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has to give for Than Shwe to take? All these obviously relate to the National Convention. If Than Shwe is agreeable to give in to the demands that NLD made as conditions of its participation, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi probably can take and enable NLD to be a role player. All that ends well is well. Let’s hope Burma’s brighter days are in the offing. The continued engagement with Burma is welcomed.

In Brief