

ner, with the regime in Yangon. There is little question that unless such a move is made, a significant part of Bangladesh's economy, in this case offshore fishing, will take a battering.

## **ROHINGYA BELONG TO BURMA**

**M**uslims of Arakan certainly belong to one of the indigenous races of Burma....In fact, there is no pure indigenous race in Burma, if they do not belong to indigenous races of Burma, we also cannot be taken as indigenous races of Burma": Sao Shwe Thaik, the first elected President of the Union of Burma.

Mr. Sultan Ahmed, son of a Landlord - Molvi Akramuddin, was born in 1901 at Molvi Para (Balukhali - Thaychaung), Maungdaw, Arakan, Burma; matriculated from the government Muslim High School, Chittagong in 1919; received B.A degree from the University of Calcutta in 1924 and B.L degree from Rangoon University in 1929; enrolled as Higher Grade pleader on 2nd December 1930 and practiced law both in Rangoon and Akyab; worked as an Assistant Township Officer (A.T.O) at Maungdaw from December 1942 to 7th June 1946; joined the Judicial department and became First Class Magistrate under British Government; President of the Jamait-e-Ulema, North Arakan and became Member of the Constituent Assembly of the Union of Burma in 1947, and since then a member of the Chamber of Deputies in the Burmese Parliament; admitted an advocate of the High Court,

Rangoon; served nearly 10 years from October 1949 to September 1959 – as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Minorities, Ministry of Relief and Resettlements, and the Ministry of Social and Religious Affairs; took refuge in Bangladesh during 1978 Rohingya exodus to Bangladesh and struggled as the President of the Rohingya Refugee Welfare Organisation; died in his old age on 2nd March 1981 at Chittagong while in exile in Bangladesh.

In a memorandum to the government of the Union of Burma, dated 18th June 1948, Mr. Sultan Ahmed (MP) in the capacity of the President of Jamait-e-Ulema, North Arakan, lodged strong protest against a conspiracy to deny the Rohingyas of their right of franchise immediately after the independence. The excerpt of the memorandum follows:

1. That it is disheartening to note the decision and attitude of the government at this late stage towards the Muslims of Arakan who have always identified themselves as Burman with whom they have merged themselves in good faith that they will be treated on the same lines as Burman and will be given equal rights. Those Arakanese Buddhists, historically known as Mugs have been taken as one of the pure indigenous races of Burma merely because of their religion. On following the line of artificial classification, it will be quite clear that if the Muslims of Arakan adopt the religion of Lord Buddha they would be included in the indigenous races of Burma or Arakan. If this religious distinction is eliminated the Muslim of Arakan will come under the same racial category as the Arakanese Buddhists.

2. That according to history, Islam reached Arakan before 788 .AD and it attracted the local people to come to the fold of Islam en masse all over Burma. Since then Islam had played an important part towards the advancement of civilisation in Arakan where Muslims and Buddhists lived side by side for centuries with amity and concord as one family and ruled the country together. Coins and medallions were issued bearing "Kalima" (the profession of faith in Islam) in Persian script. Persian was the court language of Arakan and it was common for the kings to adopt Muslim names.

3. That the British played divide and rule in Arakan with the result that many of the Arakanese Buddhist brethren bear hatred against the Muslims and threat them as "Kalas" foreigners. This hatred should no longer be bred in the Union of Burma as it had been brought up in the nursery of British imperialism.

4. Like other indigenous races of Burma, the Muslims of North Arakan inhabit in a sufficient contiguous territory in sufficient numbers in defined geographical area having all necessary characteristics of an indigenous race which can never be denied by any right thinking person uninfluenced by feelings of racial and religious hatred.

5. That different races have different names, but the Muslims specially the orthodox type throughout the world to what ever nationality they may belong keep, on their birth, the Islamic names in Arabic language. Some prefer national names, some Islamic name, some both national and Islamic names and this is the

custom with the Muslims every where in the world. Thus with Islamic names, one should not be misled that the children of the soil should be foreigners. It is the most lamentable and unfortunate tragedy that the officials of the government are fully ignorant in this respect. As soon as they find any person with Islamic names they take him as "Kalas" though he may be pure extract of indigenous races and strike out his name from the voters list. Immediate change of heart and practice of this nature is called for.

6. That the Muslims of Arakan who have their proud history, culture and tradition as other indigenous races of Burma, and there is no justification to take them as foreign race for the simple reason that they profess Islam and keep Islamic names. If the Kachin, Chins, Shan Karen and Burman are brought together, one can easily distinguish from their features who are Kachins, Karens, Shan and so on.. They are also different from one another in their language, customs and culture. Similar is the case with the Muslims of North Arakan who have been together as a race in a group from time immemorial in a territory included within the Union of Burma. If the Kachin, Chins, Shans, Karen etc. are defined as indigenous races, there can not be any question why the Muslims of North Arakan who have merged themselves with the Burmans will be ignored and will not be treated as such. Any different treatment will be unjust, illegal and unconstitutional.

7. That many of the high officials of the state, who do not even care to turn out the pages of the history and old records and to trace the development of the Muslims of Arakan which according to them, a Kala race - this misconceived notion has always been mooted and challenged in press and platform



and finally set at rest by the authorities concerned.

8. Just before the last election, the Muslims of Akyab district North constituency were recognised as children of the soil and first taken as eligible to vote or to stand for election on the ground of their being one of the indigenous races of Burma, but when the Aung San - Atlee Agreement was out, the government misunderstood the position and it was notified that unless they declared themselves as Burma nationals, they would not be eligible to vote or to stand for election to the constituent Assembly.

A protest was immediately made against this decision on the ground of their being one of the indigenous races of Burma and the government withheld the first decision and allowed the Muslims to vote or stand for elections held in March 1947, and Mr. Sultan Ahmed and Mr. Abdul Gaffar returned on the votes of this Muslims as members of the constituent Assembly and these members are still continuing in office, representing the Akyab district North constituency and took the oath of allegiance to the Union of Burma on the 4th January 1948 as members of the new parliament of the Union of Burma.

This decision and action of the government conclusively proved that these Muslims as a whole or in-groups are accepted as one of the indigenous races of Burma. And in this connection, it may be pointed out that the Akyab district North constituency is non-communal rural constitu-

ency and these Muslims of Arakan belong to this constituency. It is not understood how they can be treated under clause (IV) section II of the Constitution. By so doing about 95% of the population residing in this constituency, at a stroke of the pen, become foreigners, which action they strongly felt as unjust and uncalled for.

9. When section II of the Constitution of the Union of Burma was being framed, a doubt as to whether the Muslims of North Arakan fell under the section sub-clauses (1) (II) and (III), arose and in effect an objection was put in to have the doubt cleared in respect of the

term “Indigenous” as used in the constitution, but it was withdrawn on the understanding and assurance of the President of the constituent Assembly, at present His Excellency the President of the Union of Burma, who when approached for clarification with this question, said, “Muslims of Arakan certainly belong to one of the indigenous races of Burma which you represent. In fact there is no pure indigenous race in Burma, and that if you do not belong to indigenous races of Burma, we also can not be taken an indigenous races of Burma.” Being satisfied with his kind explanation, the objection put in was withdrawn.

10. When Hon`ble Bo Let Ya the Deputy Prime Minister, was pleased to visit Maungdaw recently, he was kind enough to expound the principles laid down in the constitution of the Union of Burma, but it appeared on the “New Times of Burma” that he addressed the inhabitants of Maungdaw as “Chittagonians” which term, although it might not be his intention, was objectionable, and contradictory in relation to the Muslims of North Arakan forming parts and parcel of Indigenous races of Burma. The Prime Minister U Nu expressed regrets for the use of wrong terms “Chittagonians” and directed that it should be either “Arakanese Muslims” or “Burmese Muslims”.

11. The term Burmese Muslims published in the form of Press communiqué dated 9th August 1941 was embodied in a notification dated 27th September 1941 issued by His Excellency Sir Domon Smith, the Governor of Burma. This notification still holds good under the constitutional rights given in the constitution of the Union of Burma.

12. That the Muslims of North Arakan owe their allegiance to the Union of Burma and their loyalty to the present government is unquestionable. But the action (Telegram) of the Election Commission has created a strong resentment and unpleasant atmosphere among the public. Could this telegram be issued and things were allowed to drift like this if our beloved Bogyoke (Gen. Aung San) were alive today?

13. That in the last war, during the North Arakan campaign the Muslims of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Kyauktaw scarified their lives and properties and fought against the enemy and gave it a crashing blow, for the attainment of freedom of Burma, and their brilliant and heroic records will, certainly go down to history

like other races of Burma. They have had to put up with British withdrawals yet they had come back with government forces and died with and for them. I wonder if any other people in like circumstances can tell the same story of loyalty and patience as can these Muslims.

14. By practical deed throughout Burma campaign and after the war till this day, the Muslims of North Arakan have proved that the responsibilities for maintaining peace and tranquillity in the country and for preserving in the independence of the Union of Burma, with the best hope of getting equal treatment in all spheres of life, as developed on the all races and citizens of the Union of Burma, are being discharged in the letter and spirit.

15. That it is the birth right of each and every Muslim of Arakan as a whole to be one of the indigenous races of Burma, and nothing short of this, will satisfy this race, and justice should be done to them in their legal and constitutional demand.

Under the circumstances stated above I, in the best interest of the government and the people, fervently pray and confidently hope that the birth right of the Muslims of North Arakan taken as a whole as other indigenous races of Burma, be safeguarded and they be taken as qualified voters as Karenis, Karen, Chins, Rakhine etc, and the contents of the Telegram referred to above be withdrawn immediately and that necessary orders be issued without delay to avoid further dissatisfaction and confusion.

## **POINT OF EXIT-ENTRY (POE) NO-1. MAUNG DAW**

By SU Ahamed

**T**he point of exit-entry (1) of Maungdaw is a jetty where passengers to go out and come in by using the waterway of Naf river. The Naf River facilitates the journey to go to the northern part of Maungdaw district and cross border journey to Bangladesh. Everyday, hundreds of passengers use the jetty point to go up to Taungbro of northern Maungdaw (30 miles journey) and to Teknaf of Bangladesh. The passengers are almost Rohingya Muslims and small motorized boats are used. As the common border between Burma and Bangladesh is controlled by Nasaka forces, Maungdaw jetty is also controlled