

Suu Kyi still
under house arrest
1/12
5/6/12

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON, Dec. 3. — Tight security ringed Aung San Suu Kyi's house today following the release of several of her lieutenants and ahead of a key hearing of a property suit the Opposition leader faces.

Police surrounded her house and there were no signs that she would be allowed freedom.

A government spokesman had said on Friday that "the temporary restrictions on the six NLD central executive committee members has been lifted... And they are resuming their normal activities..."

Mrs Suu Kyi has been under house arrest since 22 September, when she and other NLD leaders attempted to board a train in Mandalay, in the country's north.

Tensions between her and the Junta remained high.

THE STATESMAN

4 DEC 2000

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GLOBESCAN

U.S. honour for Suu Kyi

WASHINGTON, DEC 7. The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, on Thursday gave away America's highest civilian honour, the presidential medal of freedom to the Nobel laureate, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, leading the long-drawn movement for restoration of democracy in military-ruled Myanmar. Mr. Suu Kyi's son, Mr. Alexander (in picture, with Mr. Clinton) received the award on her behalf as she is under house arrest. Mr. Clinton, while presenting the award, praised Ms. Suu Kyi's contribution to democracy and human rights and described her as an inspiration to all. "She fought an election that was neither free nor fair and yet her party won 80 per cent of the seats but she was not allowed to form the government," Mr. Clinton said. "Instead, she was arrested and she has seen her supporters beaten and tortured and killed. Yet she has never responded to hatred and violence and all she has called for is peaceful dialogue," he noted. The President spoke of years of tyranny and poverty in a land of inherent promise. He also recalled Martin Luther King's words that injustice anywhere is a threat to all everywhere, and renewed his support for democracy and human rights everywhere. — AP

THE HINDU

8 DEC 2000

A NERVOUS JUNTA

Suu Kyi's strategy deepens junta's crisis

THERE is no let-up in the attack unleashed by Myanmar's military junta — ironically named the State Peace and Development Council — on Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy. After her nine-day stand-off with the military in a Yangon suburb about a month ago, followed by her being barred from travelling to Mandalay, SPDC generals have gone all out to stifle the 55-year-old Nobel laureate and her party into silence. They have locked her up at her home and taken her key party aides into protective custody and also “temporarily” closed down her party headquarters so that observance of NLD's 12th anniversary can be stalled. These are signs of desperation; generals are nervous that the irrepressible pro-democracy leader is working hard to arouse the 48 million Myanmar people. In a renewed challenge, she and her party are busy drafting a national constitution and are firm in their resolve to continue with the two-year exercise of a proxy parliament. Her approach of moderation and dialogue in ending the stand-off has not been reciprocated by her tormentors who are threatening to ban the NLD altogether. No less a worry is the remark of the Thai foreign minister that Asean was having a “serious image problem” because of continuing political unrest in Myanmar.

The concern of the generals is understandable for other reasons too. Despite their ruthless attempts to “crush” Suu Kyi and her followers, they have not been able to snuff out resistance. The attempt to destroy the NLD by forced resignations has only helped to further strengthen the resolve of both Suu Kyi and her supporters. Also Suu Kyi has timed her push when signs of disharmony are clearly visible within the junta. The recent dismissal of Brig-Gen Zaw Tun, the deputy minister for national development, for openly debunking the junta's claim of higher economic growth and criticising the inconsistency in the trade policy have lent credence to Suu Kyi's contention that Myanmar under the junta has deteriorated both economically and socially and that serious differences exist within the junta over key issues. One of the brightest and articulate officers Zaw Tun blamed those holding responsible posts in the junta for plummeting investment. The generals manning key ministries “did not have proper awareness”. In fact, his criticism justified Suu Kyi's point that government practices inimical to a healthy society and failure to adopt sound macroeconomic policies have pushed the country into an economic and social morass. What Zaw Tun hinted at was that lack of good governance was at the root of Myanmar's troubles; a point which has been repeatedly harped upon by Suu Kyi. This suggests that even a section of the junta concurs with her views. It is the fear of challenge from within that is presently haunting the warlords. Any change that leads to accountable governance is still anathema to the SPDC generals.

THE STATESMAN

- 1 OCT 2000

SE Asia
Myanmar
HD-12

Junta breaks protest by Suu Kyi, aides

3792

By Amit Baruah

JAKARTA, SEPT. 2. Myanmar military authorities are said to have ended a nine-day-long protest by the country's pro-democracy leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, a little distance from the capital Yangon.

While the Myanmar Government claimed that it had "facilitated" the "safe and convenient return" of Ms. Suu Kyi and her associates to their homes on Saturday morning, Mr. Tin Oo, vice-chairman of the National League for Democracy, said the group was "brought back forcefully".

"Daw Suu Kyi, her travel companions and all the attendants arrived home fit and sound this morning after their stay in Dala town (outside Yangon)," the Government said in a statement.

Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, Myanmar's intelligence chief, said his country would not succumb to foreign pressure on a return to elected Government.

"Today, some countries are exerting all kinds of pressure on Myanmar in their efforts to cast it in their own mould," the General said, adding that they were

using "every pretext, from forced labour and narcotic drugs to health and education conditions" to interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs. "In fact, everyone is aware that the policy of exerting undue pressures and economic sanctions is a failure...and relying on its own resources, Myanmar will continue to follow the path best suited to its own conditions," the General was quoted as saying.

AFP reports:

Military authorities today raided the headquarters of Ms Suu Kyi's political party.

In an apparent crackdown on Opposition forces, a large number of riot police and intelligence officers occupied the headquarters of the National League for Democracy (NLD), an official source said. "A huge amount of incriminatory materials and documents have been seized during the raid," it said.

An unknown number of NLD members who had been in the building overnight were still inside, another source said, although it was not clear if they had been detained.

INDU

3792

Junta forces Suu Kyi to return home

AP & REUTERS

5-12-99

YANGON, Sept. 2. — Nearly 200 riot police raided a roadside convoy and forced Aung San Suu Kyi to return to the Capital, ending a nine-day standoff between the Opposition leader and Myanmar's military regime, a top official in Suu Kyi's party said today. The government confirmed the move, saying Suu Kyi and her party "arrived home safe and sound this morning."

The 55-year-old Nobel peace laureate was stopped by police on 24 August in the Yangon suburb of Dala as she and party colleagues attempted to travel to the countryside for political organisation work. The group camped out in two vehicles, refusing to return to the Capital. The standoff drew international condemnation of the country's iron-fisted military rule.

"Around midnight, nearly 200 riot police raided the place where we were staying and forcibly took Aung San Suu Kyi and all of us," said Tin Oo, Suu Kyi's deputy in

the National League for Democracy.

A visibly angry Tin Oo told reporters the group was brought back to Yangon in separate police cars and said he thought that Suu Kyi was taken back to her house. He could provide few details as security personnel ordered reporters away from his house in Yangon where he was speaking.

A government press release, titled "Dala incident ends happily," said Suu Kyi and her party were escorted back to their residences in Yangon in a motorcade facilitated by the government for their safe and convenient return.

The action, the release said, was taken because of monsoon season rains, Suu Kyi's personal safety and complaints at her party about living conditions at her stalled convoy.

Yangon residents reported heavy security today around the NLD headquarters and the homes of several of its leading members. The government's move to end the stand-off followed more than a week of embarrassment for the ruling generals,

who have faced severe international criticism since the NLD leader was stopped by police near the town of Dala.

But powerful military intelligence chief Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, for remarks published today, dismissed it as a sign of pressure on the government, saying it was bound to fail and Myanmar would not be swayed from its course. It was the first time Suu Kyi had tried to leave Yangon since another roadside confrontation in 1998 that lasted 13 days until deteriorating health and dehydration forced her to return home. The government minister Surin rebuked Thai foreign concern that the late Pitsuwat for voicing concern that the latest confrontation with Suu Kyi would have an adverse impact on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), such as The Nation/ANN. "Publishing such remarks are not fruitful to the good neighbourly relations as well as harmony and solidarity among fellow Asean members," Myanmar's foreign minister Win Aung said of Surin's comments.

Smell of prosperity

5/19
5/19

THE best two economic indicators of a potential upturn in Myanmar's international trade are the nightly goings-on in bars and cement-bag sales. When business is brisk, prostitutes are out in force and cement sales rise. Despite official denials that Myanmar has a sex industry, the word on the street is that bars of certain hotels are starting to hum.

In a country where official statistics are hard to come by and even harder to confirm, such evidence may be the best that Myanmar watchers can hope for.

After three years of recession, declining trade figures and economic sanctions imposed by the West, Myanmar now may be looking at a brighter economic future.

But such signs of increased international interest will not be welcomed by Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the Opposition National League for Democracy, who was in a roadside stand-off with the government just outside Yangon last week.

She has consistently called for sanctions and for tourists to stay away, a line backed by the USA, which has banned new investments in the country.

But trade figures released by Singapore's Trade Development Board are among the first to indicate a recovery, of sorts.

They show a seven per cent growth in bilateral trade in January to July, over the same period in 1999. Trade is now worth S\$ 551 million.

But getting to grips with Myanmar's investment and trade figures is difficult, a fact acknowledged by the country's former deputy planning and economy minister Zaw Tun, who was sacked after a July speech in which he attacked the junta for covering up the terrible state of the nation's economy.

Singapore businessmen say they have noticed what appears to be a growth in interest.

"There are more trading companies but not more investment," said one, who asked not to be named.

Infrastructure projects were still not on Singaporean firms'

Yangon's thriving nightlife and cement-bag sales are considered best indicators of Myanmar's economic upturn, says JAMES EAST. Given the junta's track record, statistics are hard to come by



Democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, is unlikely to be elated at international interest in any sign of economic recovery under military rule.

radar screens. Of the 100 or so trading firms, most were involved in the seafood and agricultural export trade.

International business advisers based in Yangon say Myanmar is potentially a good place to invest, but half the battle was in overcoming "misinformation" about the country.

They blame previous pull-outs by companies on the Asian meltdown rather than on domestic political reasons.

One adviser said: "The past 18 months have seen a significant slowdown in new investments in Myanmar. While new investments again seem to be starting now, it is too early to tell whether there is a shift in the companies investing in Myanmar."

3/5/00
Myanmar

She said Chinese companies were using soft loans tied to construction projects, property development and light manufacturing to establish a growing presence.

Cement sales are also up. The government has just teamed up with a Chinese company to build a plant near Mandalay, with a daily production capacity of 400 tons. Exports from Thailand are also rising.

Next year, thanks to a new commercial navigation agreement, Chinese ships will be able to ply the Mekong river, boosting Myanmar's trade prospects.

And plans to hook Thailand with a north-south highway running from China via Myanmar is almost certain to accelerate as Asian economies recover.

Asean countries have not been deterred from trading with Myanmar, but strict financial policies of the military government — including continued control of foreign exchange dealing — led to Toyota Motor and seasoning manufacturer Ajinomoto pulling out this year after the government banned imports of vital raw materials and automobiles.

"The main complaint of foreign investors in Myanmar is the non-convertible kyat," said the business adviser.

Others blame a lack of financial management experience among the Generals. Despite this, Myanmar remains desperate to attract foreign businesses.

In an interview with the Yangon-based *Myanmar Times*, Foreign Minister Win Aung said: "Our foreign policy is very clear, we want to create friendship with every country including with those big powers in the West who are now criticising us."

But given the criticism in the West of Myanmar's human rights record, those governments appear unlikely to change their stance any time soon — a move which gives firms from China and neighbouring countries greater trade and commercial opportunities.

— The Straits Times/Asia News Network

Junta continues crackdown, faces global ire

11

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Myanmar
SI-5

REUTERS & AFP

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YANGON, Sept. 3 -- The Myanmar junta has reportedly put Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi and fellow NLD leaders under house arrest, provoking worldwide condemnation.

The authorities reportedly took away files from Mrs Suu Kyi's party office, cut off the NLD leaders' phone lines and stopped foreign diplomats from meeting them.

"We've tried to visit several of them but have been unable to get near their homes. We were turned away by military intelligence and riot police," a western diplomat said.

The government, however, denied that NLD leaders were under house arrest, saying their movement was being restricted. A spokesman said the tight security around the leaders was only a temporary measure.

The junta, which yesterday forced Mrs Suu Kyi to return to

Yangon after a nine-day roadside confrontation outside the capital, accused the NLD of links with terrorists.

The USA expressed outrage at the treatment of Mrs Suu Kyi and her colleagues and said it had reports that the party's executive committee members were under house arrest. "The USA is outraged and strongly condemns the Burmese authorities' treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party members and the violations of their fundamental human rights," the US Secretary of states, Mrs Madeleine Albright, said.

She said reports were that military intelligence agents had taken away files from NLD offices.

The British foreign secretary, Mr Robin Cook, condemned the crackdown, saying it showed the weakness of the Yangon regime. "We are very concerned... We need to know she's safe," Mr Cook said in France

on the sidelines of an EU foreign ministers' meeting yesterday.

The 15-member EU issued a statement expressing concern at the forced return to the capital of Mrs Suu Kyi.

Mr Cook said: "We're examining with EU colleagues and other international partners what measures we should take in response once the facts have been clarified."

Thailand's daily, the Nation, said in an editorial today that a policy of "constructive engagement" by countries in the association of the Asean had failed.

The junta today charged the NLD with "engaging in terrorist activity". "Certain quarters of the NLD have been engaging in terrorist activity," said the junta's spokesman.

He said the NLD had collaborated with the insurgent group, God's Army, in smuggling five remote-controlled bombs into Myanmar.

THE STATESMAN

4 SEP 2000

MYANMAR / CRACKDOWN ON SUU KYI

HD-16
A/19

Junta draws global wrath

YANGON, SEPT. 3. The crackdown by Myanmar's ruling military on the pro-democracy Opposition party of the Nobel Peace Laureate, Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, has provoked strong international condemnation.

On Saturday, the ruling junta forced Ms Suu Kyi to return to Yangon, ending a nine-day roadside confrontation with her just outside the capital. She had left Yangon on August 24 to try to visit supporters.

The United States expressed its outrage and said it had reports that the party's executive committee members were under house arrest. "The U.S. is outraged and strongly condemns the Burmese authorities' treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party members and the violations of their fundamental human rights," the U.S. Secretary of States, Ms Madeleine Albright, said in a statement.

The British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Robin Cook, condemned the crackdown, saying it showed the weakness of the Yangon regime. "We are very concerned... We need to know she's safe, is well. What's happened to her is a scandal," Mr. Cook said in the French town of Evian on the sidelines of a meeting of European Union Foreign Ministers.

The 15-member E.U. issued a statement expressing concern at the forced return of Ms Suu Kyi to the capital.

Thailand's *Nation* newspaper said in an editorial that despite the end of the roadside confrontation, the stand-off between Myanmar and the rest of the world continued. It said a policy of "constructive engagement" by countries in the Association of South East Asian Nations had failed.

Meanwhile, security around the headquarters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the residences of Ms Suu Kyi and other party leaders was tightened today with dozens of policemen

deployed in the area and about 50 officers outside party offices.

Diplomats said the telephones of NLD leaders had been cut off. They were also denied access to Ms Suu Kyi and other leaders.

NLD sources said the movements of key party leaders were "restricted" and three senior members appeared to be under house arrest. But, in a sign that the NLD had not been officially banned, flags and symbols of the party were fluttering in front of the headquarters.

Exiled Opposition leaders slammed the junta, stating that the way the military regime ended the stand-off showed "the hypocrisy that underlines the military's rule". Mr. Khin Maung Win, an executive member of the Exiled Burma Lawyers' Council, wrote in the Bangkok local press. "The (Yangon) regime will never give up or introduce political or human rights reforms," adding, "optimism that something for the better will occur in Burma is evaporating fast".

The military Government today charged that the NLD was "engaging in terrorist activities". It also said some senior party members had been "requested" to remain at home during the investigation.

"Certain quarters of the NLD have been engaging in terrorist activity," said the official spokesman for the junta. The NLD had collaborated with the anti-regime insurgent group God's Army in smuggling five remote-controlled bombs into Myanmar, the spokesman said. — AFP, Reuters

THE HINDU

4 SEP 2000

WHEN the Myanmar junta forbade Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters from travelling outside Yangon to meet fellow party members, a new stage of confrontation between the ruling Generals and "the lady" was set.

This time around, the stand-off will have a legal twist to it. But whatever the outcome, the final analysis will once again show the hypocrisy that underlines the military's rule. Two months ago, Mrs Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy filed a formal complaint to the ruling State Peace and Development Council based on Section 80 of the Civil Procedure Code.

The code stipulates steps needed to take a civil suit against a government agency and Section 80 states that a civil suit against a state agency can be filed two months after a formal complaint is submitted. The NLD also sent another notification to the Election Commission chairman and the SPDC chairman, General Than Shwe. The letters demanded they prohibit their subordinates from all actions that illegally deter the activities of a legally registered political party, namely the NLD. A stop was also sought to harassment, intimidation and trying to force elected representatives to resign.

Two months has elapsed and it

Intimidation won't wash

Suu Kyi's party is set to file a civil suit against the government agency either under the Specific Relief Act or the Contract Act, says KHIN MAUNG WIN



Children in New Delhi protesting against the restriction of movement on Aung San Suu Kyi, before the stand-off ended on Saturday.— AP/PTI.

support of other players, both inside and outside Myanmar.

The democracy movement has taken up options like street demonstrations, ballots, non-violent political defiance and armed struggle. But the junta is still in power and has suppressed any attempt to restore democracy.

The West's policy of sanctions against the junta has been criticised by key East Asian regional powers as fruitless. At the same time, Asean's "constructive engagement" policy has also failed to change the nature of the regime. A recent confidential report by the Australian ambassador to Myanmar is a testimony that the international community feels the regime will never give up or introduce political and human-rights reforms.

Given the lack of options, the international community is being pressured by democracy-loving people to come up with new ways to deal with the junta. The past has shown that whatever approaches the world uses against the junta, they have not produced fruitful results. This is why the regime still survives and will continue to remain as an obstacle to democratisation in Myanmar. The time has come for all domestic and international players concerned to show united support for the NLD's legal initiatives.

— *The Nation/Asia News Network*

but the Myanmar Supreme Court dismissed the charges on the ground that there was no evidence to support the claim. The Supreme Court also said the NLD did not follow all necessary procedure, as stated in the Criminal Procedure Code, when it tried to sue the government.

Unlike previous lawsuits, which were based on criminal grounds, this time around the NLD seems to have carefully observed the provisions in the existing laws. Apart from following necessary procedure, the NLD also has strong legal grounds to go ahead with legal warfare. But no matter how guarantee the process will proceed to a prosecution of the regime as it would in a society where the rule of law prevails.

This is because the SPDC, which is itself illegal, can easily interfere with the judicial process at any time it pleases. There have been numerous incidences and experiences that demonstrate the junta's desire to destroy Myanmar's legal system if that is what it takes to suppress legitimate Opposition movements. The success of the NLD's latest legal efforts depends on the way the court

is just a matter of time before the NLD files a formal suit under the existing civil laws. Although the NLD is non-comittal on when they will file the suit, there are, at least two laws which the party can use as the basis for their case, NLD members say. One is the Specific Relief Act and the other, the Contract Act. The first enables a government agency to perform its duty. In this case, the burden is on the NLD to show that it is capable and has the manpower to perform its duties as a legitimate party. The fact that it won a landslide victory in the May 1990 general election is testimony that the party has what it takes and the legitimacy to represent the people of Myanmar.

In the notifications, the NLD argued that the SPDC's delay in convening the first session of the People's Assembly, known in Myanmar as the Pyithu Hluttaw. The SPDC was reminded that it has yet to transfer power to the people as they had promised. Indeed, the NLD considers this a complete derogation of the rights of the people who cast their ballots. Under the Specific Relief Act, the NLD in its suit can request the court

to issue a decree directing the SPDC and the Election Commission to fulfil their duty of convening an Assembly session.

The Contract Act allows a plaintiff to sue another party for breach of contract between them. The NLD notifications repeatedly mentioned the facts that clearly constitute contractual agreements between the SPDC and the Election Commission on the one hand, and the elected MPs and the people on the other. The Election Law, under which the 1990 elections were conducted, is in this regard a text of contract between the said parties. The verbal public promises of power transfer by the Myanmar Generals are also evidence of a contractual agreement. In a lawsuit in 1999, the NLD claimed the junta had illegally harassed and intimidated its members,

THE STATESMAN

20.5 SEP 2000

Junta puts Suu Kyi under house arrest, defies world opinion

REUTERS
YANGON, SEPT 4

96-9

NOBEL Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi was kept locked in her Yangon residence on Monday as Myanmar's military government mounted a crackdown against its opponents despite world outrage.

Diplomats said the gate to Suu Kyi's residence had been padlocked since she was forcibly returned in the early hours of Saturday after a nine-day stand-off with the authorities in her car outside Yangon.

Embassy officials and members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) who tried to visit her were turned away. Diplomats said her telephone, and those of other senior NLD officials, seemed to have been cut.

"Her gate is padlocked. Not even staff or her personal driver are being allowed in there at the moment," said a Western diplomat in Yangon.

At the NLD headquarters in Yangon, around a dozen policemen stood guard in front of the building on Monday and dozens more were deployed in the area. They did not appear to be armed,

but police with riot gear and shields were visible behind the scenes.

Yangon was calm on Monday, residents said, with many people unaware of the events of the weekend. The government denied that Suu Kyi and senior colleagues were under house arrest, but said they had been asked to

"stay at their respective residences" while it investigated reports that some NLD members had been involved in "terrorist activity".

A government statement said there were reports that some NLD members had conspired to bring bombs into Myanmar with the

help of God's Army, a rag-tag guerrilla group led by two chevron-smoking teenage twins revered as having godlike powers.

The NLD had won the 1990 elections by a landslide margin but has never been allowed to govern.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he felt "deep concern" over events in Myanmar. "Reports concerning further infringement of the freedom of movement and the freedom of political expression are particularly disturbing," Annan said in a statement.



In custody, again

INDIAN EXPRESS

5 SEP 2000

...military junta. (AP)

Burma slams critics in West!

BY AUNG HLA TUN

Rangoon, Sept. 5: Burma's ruling military hit out at its Western critics on Tuesday, accusing them of interfering in its internal affairs as it kept pro-democracy Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi locked up inside her home.

The Nobel Peace laureate and other leaders of the National League for Democracy were confined to their residences for a fourth day after the military forcibly ended a nine-day road-

side stand-off between the two sides. In a clear reference to the United States and Britain, state-run newspapers on Tuesday quoted Burma's powerful head of military intelligence, Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt, as saying "two big western countries" were meddling in Burma's affairs.

"Two big western countries are applying various means to interfere in and dominate the internal affairs of Burma and destroy her relations with the international community," the papers quoted

Gen. Khin Nyunt as telling a meeting. "They are trying to drag the Burma people into poverty and hardships and to cause unrest in the nation," he said.

The US and Britain have both condemned Burma's ruling generals for their treatment of Mr Suu Kyi and other opposition leaders, and have demanded the lifting of restrictions placed on their movements. Both countries have praised the NLD, which won Burma's last democratic election in 1990. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

6 SEP 2000

Long night of terror

PERHAPS NO autocratic regime in the world today is more brutal than the military Government in Myanmar. In 1986, the 'People Power' movement toppled the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. In 1998, a vigorous student movement in Indonesia led to the collapse of another tyrant of South-East Asia. African and Latin American countries have vied with each other in recent years in shedding autocracies and embracing democracy. However, Myanmar's military regime has defied the global trend and continues to maintain itself ruthlessly in power. Only Aung San Suu Kyi has kept the flame of freedom burning. The recent crackdown on the leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the reported house arrest of Ms Suu Kyi have evoked sharp reaction from the West.

Neither economic sanctions nor a policy of constructive engagement pursued by Myanmar's ASEAN neighbours has had an impact on the junta. With the might of the armed forces ranged against her, the odds are stacked against the Burmese Opposition leader. Her political organisation has been worn down by years of repression. However, she has the force of her moral authority which no other modern leader except Nelson Mandela enjoys. The only prisoner of conscience in today's world, Ms Suu Kyi is a symbol of courage against tyranny. She has shown remarkable resilience despite long years of repression, the death of her husband and separation from her children. The military regime knows only too well how popular the pro-democracy leader is.

The junta's objective has been to weaken Ms Suu Kyi and to erode her support base. Unfortunately, the regime's pariah status too is fading and it is all set to join the region's economic grouping. The only way to deal with Myanmar is for the regional and Western powers to insist on the restoration of democracy. India can play a leading role in this regard. Only then will Myanmar's long night of repression end.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

• 6 SEP 2000

UK told to mind its own business

John Gittings
London, September 6

MYANMAR'S REPRESENTATIVE in Britain has told the Foreign Office that western envoys may be allowed access within a fortnight to the democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been padlocked inside her house. But his eloquent words in London were counter-balanced in Yangon by junta tongue-lashings of Britain and the British ambassador in the Myanmar capital.

The Foreign Office minister, John Battle, said in London that he had summoned the Myanmar ambassador, Kyaw Min, to protest at the military regime's crackdown on Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD).

He said the ambassador had admitted that there was "a crisis" in Yangon, and then conceded that diplomatic access to Ms Suu Kyi might be granted "within the next two weeks".

Amnesty International has expressed grave concern for the safety of Ms Suu Kyi and seven of her colleagues who are being held under house arrest. She has not been seen since September 2, when Myanmar security forces

ended her 10-day attempt to travel outside Yangon. Ms Suu Kyi is believed to be in her house in Yangon but - with phone lines cut and the main gate padlocked - that has not been confirmed.

A junta statement said that "certain quarters of the NLD have been conspiring with some armed outlawed youth organisations and an armed terrorist group, God's Army". The group has its base on the Thai border. The statement said that while senior NLD members were not

regime's assertive nationalistic line in a speech shortly before Ms Suu Kyi was forced to return home after trying to travel in her homeland.

Foreign countries, he said, were "using every pretext from forced labour and narcotic drugs, to complaints about health and education conditions to interfere in internal affairs". He also accused "two big western countries" of trying to "destroy" Myanmar's international relations.

Britain and the US are the two culprits in the regime's eyes, a message reinforced yesterday when the junta accused London's ambassador to Yangon, John Jenkins, of overstepping "universal diplomatic norms" by trying to reach the house of the NLD's deputy chairman, Tin U, on Monday. Tin U was forcibly removed with Ms Suu Kyi from the encampment and has been confined to his home since then. A Government statement said that Mr Jenkins had tried to "force his way" into Tin U's house before being blocked by a plainclothes security officer.

"It is difficult to understand why a foreign ambassador was so adamant to intrude into the internal affairs of an independent and sovereign nation," the aggrieved statement said.

Guardian News Service

Suu Kyi issue

under arrest, they had been "requested to stay at their respective residences and to cooperate with the Government during the course of investigation".

Human rights groups say that allegations of terrorist links have been made in the past to justify the mass arrest of NLD supporters. US charge d'affaires in Yangon, Priscilla Clapp, called the allegations a "malicious fabrication".

The head of the country's military intelligence, General Khin Nyunt, restated the

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 SEP 2000

Myanmar junta stays defiant despite stalemate, isolation

REUTERS
BANGKOK, SEPT 8

MYANMAR is sinking deeper into stagnation and stalemate, with no evidence of a thaw in the military's iron grip on power and no sign that a hostile international community will relax the country's isolation.

The impoverished country is increasingly becoming a pariah state, flooding its neighbours with drugs and scuppering efforts to improve relations between the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the West.

The best hope for change, analysts say, is that international pressure and economic isolation spark efforts by the military's more progressive members to push for reform.

But this could be years away, and if reforms are eventually introduced they are likely to be slow and halting.

"To be honest there is no reason for optimism," said one Western diplomat in Yangon. "There is little will to change apparent in the government."

The victims are the country's 47 million people.



Suu Kyi... Still a hostage

With the economy battered by domestic mismanagement and international sanctions, they face continued isolation and poverty unless the government makes concessions, analysts say.

As world leaders gathered in New York for a U N summit to herald the new millennium, Myanmar faced another round of condemnation for its treatment of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been confined to her house since Saturday.

Myanmar insists it is committed to democracy and blames Suu

Kyi for causing its economic ills with her calls for sanctions.

"In the outside media she has been portrayed as a person who is liked by everybody," Lieutenant-Colonel Hla Min said. "But in the real world, if your rice bowl has been broken by a certain person, I am sure that nobody is going to like or love that person."

But diplomats say that if elections were called, the opposition would be likely to match its 1990 landslide victory, which was never recognised by the government. And world leaders have thrown their weight behind Suu Kyi at the U N gathering.

"The treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi by the Burmese regime is a disgrace," British Prime Minister Tony Blair told the summit. U S President Bill Clinton also denounced the regime.

Newspapers around the world called for tougher sanctions against Myanmar.

In an editorial, the *Times of Britain* said more economic and political pressure should be brought to bear.

"There is a general perception that Western pressure on the junta is being quietly relaxed," it said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

9 SEP 2000

// 19-11 V A SHOW OF AUTOCRACY a/g

A DEMOCRATIC RENAISSANCE in Myanmar is still a dream in considerable peril. That certainly is the message which the military junta, the self-styled State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), has sought to convey to the celebrated leader of the democracy movement, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, by thwarting her latest attempt at reviving the transparently sagging spirit of her followers. In the process, the Yangon regime resorted to yet another show of authoritarianism which was nasty by any standards, although it did not as a matter of some small mercy result in the use of physical force against Ms. Suu Kyi, who still prides herself on being a votary of non-violence. The roadside showdown between her and the security minions of the SPDC at a location outside the capital was almost similar to the previous standoff in 1998. In the new battle of attrition, the motorcade of Ms. Suu Kyi and her small entourage was halted by the State officials while she was on her way to a rural constituency to deliver a presumptive pep talk to the activists of her National League for Democracy (NLD). She predictably refused to beat a retreat and decided to camp in the open, defiantly resorting to a familiar form of political resistance. The military rulers claimed, as before, that she would be better advised to avoid what could turn out to be a hazardous journey. Finally, she was 'escorted' by the 'law'-enforcement officials back to her residence after a nine-day confrontation.

The international community, led by the U.S. President at the U.N. millennium summit, has now been quick, as indeed it was in 1998, to condemn the perceivably ruthless state apparatus of Gen. Than Shwe. But the question remains unanswered about the extent to which the major powers, including in particular the European Union in the case of Myanmar, will be willing to go in forcing the SPDC to open a political dialogue with Ms. Suu Kyi to defuse the simmering

tension. It requires no emphasis that the larger issue is restoration of democracy in that South East Asian state of substantive strategic importance to some of its neighbours including notably India and China for opposite reasons. As in 1998, the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, has at present thundered against the SPDC's flagrant deprivation of Ms. Suu Kyi's rights to freedom of movement as also political expression within her own country. The Western envoys in Yangon have now been quick to protest against a denial of diplomatic access to Ms. Suu Kyi and the perceived crackdown on the NLD activists across the country. The reaction by an irate SPDC is that the NLD would need to be investigated for alleged links with an ethnic outfit of terror known as the 'God's Army' and the Western political 'provocateurs'.

These and other aspects of the idiom, if not also the ideological focus, of the Myanmar internal crisis are well known as indeed the incremental steps that the SPDC's predecessor-regime, the State Law and Order Restoration Council, took in the early 1990s to reduce Myanmar, which had held competitive elections even before its independence, to a pathetic arena of democratic debris. What is less clear, though, is the current intensity of the revolutionary democratic fervour inside Myanmar. The doubts are traceable, in one sense, to the varied ways in which the SPDC has been trying to sideline Ms. Suu Kyi or at least distance the NLD from her. In this, the Myanmar junta has quite openly been exploiting its respectability as a state-actor in the context of its relative new membership of the Association of South East Asian Nations. If the ASEAN cited the need for a stabilising engagement with Yangon as it had in the case of Beijing earlier, official India, too, cannot be oblivious to the obvious risks of isolating Myanmar.

THE HINDU

. 9 SEP 2000

Ms. Suu Kyi, who maintained a relatively low profile of late, has suddenly found herself on centre stage of world attention, thanks to a roadside standoff with the military junta. Myanmar's crisis is far from over, reports
AMIT BARUAH.

40-20
10/9

On centre stage, after roadblock

MS. AUNG SAN SUU KYI has once again reminded the world that her country lacks basic freedoms. The Myanmar pro-democracy leader drove out of Yangon on August 24 and promptly found her way blocked by military authorities.

The undisputed leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), who had maintained a relatively low profile in recent months, suddenly found herself on centre stage of world attention. A nine-day-long stand-off ensued, during which the Yangon Government said Ms. Suu Kyi and her entourage were stopped at Dala town, a short distance from the capital, for her own safety.

Clearly, Myanmar's crisis is far from over. Even as ASEAN countries and the rest of the world engage with Myanmar, the direction the country is headed for remains unclear. The military authorities may have managed to put a lid on democratic protest and sidelined the NLD and Ms. Suu Kyi to some extent, but they have been unable to provide a viable alternative to the democratic forces.

After taking power at the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1988, the junta converted itself into the State Peace and Development Council in November 1997. The junta, by all accounts, has won some degree of international support as well. Despite facing criticism, countries like Australia have engaged Myanmar at human rights seminars, with support to set up a human rights commission.

What this means in a situation where basic freedoms are denied is not clear, but it does represent a

quintessential dilemma for the democratic world — will you or will you not deal with a military Government?

There is, clearly, no "one" approach to this issue. The United States and Britain are openly critical, but important neighbours like China and India are fully engaging the military authorities. India, for instance, has two different approaches to two military-ruled countries on its eastern and western borders. While its okay to do business with Myanmar, this logic hasn't been extended to Pakistan. Of course, it can legitimately be argued that the two countries merit different policies, but one thing is common — they are ruled by men in uniform. The similarity ends there.

As the international community and neighbouring nations approach the junta, it is clear there is no immediate threat to the Yan-

gon regime. If anything, the visibility of the pro-democracy forces has been reduced by the regime. Also, the "struggle" in Myanmar has been a long one; and the international community has many other "causes" to champion.

In the initial stages of the recent protest by Ms. Suu Kyi, the regime issued "smart" statements but moved to end the stand-off after several NLD leaders had slept in their cars or in makeshift tents.

"Until safety conditions improve, Daw Suu Kyi is visiting Dala, a small but charming town which is 10 minutes by boat from Yangon," the military authorities said in a statement on August 26. They said residents and local officials, along with government doctors, were available all 24 hours to "ensure her maximum comfort, welfare and safety".

"The Government encourages

Daw Suu Kyi to return home and continue her political activities in a more secure environment in Yangon," the statement added.

As the drama unfolded on a side-road, the international community, expectedly, lashed out at the junta, using all adjectives in the book to condemn the regime. And, in a tone much different from the one used in the initial stages, the regime too let loose a verbal barrage on the international community. A comment in the state-run *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper on September 7 stated: "All these protesters, presidential candidates, heads of State, the Secretary-General of the U.N., blithely jumped on the trumpet-blowing bandwagon of calumniating (sic) Myanmar, not because they see, they hear, they know for themselves Myanmar affairs, but for their own selfish purposes and aims."

"Myanmar leaders, wise to the ways of evil-minded people, clearly foresee perils under which Suu Kyi is flitting about unwarily," the newspaper said, adding "Myanmar leaders had learnt many lessons from events taking place around the world that perpetrators of political massacres have an atrocious habit of silencing and destroying the instruments they have employed in accomplishing their sinister assignments".

Neither Ms. Suu Kyi nor her NLD colleagues have been seen after the military ended the sit-in on September 2 though the military Government has promised access to her in the days to come. Myanmar's internal conflicts, it would appear, are still playing themselves out.



Ready for any sacrifice... Myanmar refugees spilling blood from their forearms at a camp in Thailand.

THE HINDU

10 SEP 2000

Suu Kyi party to draft Constitution

ASSOCIATED PRESS

59-12
1279

YANGON, (Myanmar) Sept. 16. — Two hundred members of the democratic Opposition led by Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi met at their party headquarters on Saturday and resolved to draft a national Constitution, a party leader said. Diplomats from the USA, Britain, France, Germany, South Korea and Australia attended the meeting.

The NLD passed three resolutions at Saturday's meeting demanding release of all political prisoners, maintenance of the proxy Parliament until a proper Parliament is convened and drafting a national Constitution.

According to 1996 law, drafting a charter without the government's approval could result

CONFLICT WORRIES THAI MINISTER

BANGKOK, Sept 16. — The Thai foreign minister, Mr Surin Pitsuwan, cited Myanmar as he urged Asean to quickly address its image problem -- created by growing political conflicts and violence in member states -- to restore the confidence of foreign investors and boost the group's bargaining power.

The political tension in Myanmar, violence in West Timor and Wednesday's bombing of the Jakarta Stock Exchange, in addition to the oil crisis, have raised fears of another economic crisis. The Vietnamese foreign minister, Mr Nguyen Dy Nien, has however said Asean should not interfere in the problem in Myanmar. — **The Nation/Asia News Network**

in a 5 to 20-year prison sentence.

The party on Saturday commemorated the second anniversary of its proxy Parliament called Committee Representing People's Parliament.

Military authorities blocked roads leading to the two-story NLD office, but in the after-

noon let party members and diplomats pass. Reporters were however barred from entering.

At the meeting, Mrs Suu Kyi announced she would take over as CRPP secretary and its representative for ethnic affairs, taking over for Aye Tha Aung, who was arrested and sentenced to 21 years in prison in

June for violating a publication law and an emergency law.

On Friday, NLD leaders emerged from their homes and reopened the party headquarters, which were raided on September 2 by the authorities.

In her first public comments since her confinement, Mrs Suu Kyi appeared determined to maintain political pressure on the military regime, daring authorities to stop her from traveling outside the capital.

An NLD statement issued late Friday demanded the immediate release of 11 party members it said were arrested earlier this week despite the government's announcement that the party would be allowed to go about daily activities as normal. In addition, 15 NLD members outside the capital had been arrested.

THE STATESMAN

17 SEP 2007

SR Asia
16/9/00

Suu Kyi leaves house, dares junta

HD-116

YANGON, SEPT. 15. Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's pro-democracy leader, left her residence today after two weeks of virtual house arrest and dared the military Government to stop her plans to travel outside the capital.

Accompanied by other leaders of her party, Ms Suu Kyi today entered her newly-reopened party headquarters in Yangon. "I shall be travelling outside Rangoon (Yangon) within the next 10 days for party organisational work. It will be an organised trip, and we will do it openly. It is high time the SPDC (the ruling military council) stops putting restrictions on our rights," she said.

The Telegraph reports:

Western diplomats visited Ms Suu Kyi on Thursday and declared her "uncowed and ready to carry on the fight".

A spokesman for the British embassy said: "She was well and in good spirits but thinner from her ordeal."

Ms Suu Kyi told the envoys that she was wrestled to the ground by six policewomen as 200 security officers forcibly returned her and 14 party colleagues to the capital on Sept 1.

Some of her supporters were manhandled and handcuffed, she said. The group had been trapped in a paddy field in Dalla for nine days, prevented from attempting to visit a party office near Yangon.

In the harshest action for years against the Nobel Peace laureate and her party, Ms Suu Kyi was padlocked in her house for 12 days. The party's entire central executive was also kept in their homes incommunicado. The army raided the NLD's headquarters and removed large quantities of paperwork, claiming it was investigating alleged links with terrorism. The office was apparently open on Thursday, although armed men maintained a guard outside.

The NLD won a landslide victory in elections in 1990 but has never been allowed to govern by the military.

The American charge d'affaires, Ms Priscilla Clapp, was the first foreign visitor. The British were followed by representatives from the United Nations Development Fund.

THE HINDU

16 SEP 2000

It's the Burmese Gulag. An Orwellian State where democracy witnesses a daily death

Behind the bamboo curtain

BY D. R. RAJAGOPAL

WE ARE in hell, save us.' This terse message in laconic style is found scrawled in big black bold letters in both Burmese and English scripts on scores of posters, stuck on lamp-posts, pillars and walls of many buildings at street-corners, market-squares and near roundabouts of main roads and national highways, which lead out of the heavily-garrisoned, tropical national capital, Yangon (Rangoon), and from Mandalay and elsewhere in the hermit state of Burma (Myanmar) — behind the 'bamboo curtain'.

The bloated ruling elite of the military junta denounces the 'inflammatory' slogan as 'infra dig' to Burmese national psyche, besides being 'treacherous and anti-national'. Radio Yangon broadcasts, almost *ad nauseam*, everyday, Mobile military patrol units on vigil rush around and pull down the posters and hunt down the perpetrators of this 'political sacrilege', as radio, television and the other media maintain in their steady drum-beat the monologue of the dictatorship.

Young volunteers — with obvious spunk and determination belonging to the Opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) — led by Dr Aung San Suu Kyi, are hounded and hunted down. Their freedom is always on the threshold. If caught, they are spirited away, never to be seen or heard again.

Peripatetic diplomats of urbanity, known for their professional competence and unflinching observation of the sad and daily vignettes of Burma's polity and 'civil society', speak in whispers at many an Asian airport and sundry other 'neutral zones' about the pessimism all around; they speak of the depressing political ritual of taut nerves and explosive ambience on both sides of the political divide.

Visiting businessmen and fleeting travellers in obvious awe of the magnificent hill-top Shwedagon Pagoda beside the Yangon river, speak of these subversive posters, reappearing again and again in the heart of the capital. They are torn down with "asinine consistency", say all those diplomats and political realists who are still able to

retain their sensitivity and conscientiousness and are still counted among the Burmese patriots. There is no irony anymore in what they say, only resignation. Thus, in a nutshell, is the Burmese Gulag in the first year of the new millennium!

But Yangon isn't rattled by this exposure of the state of tyranny, political subterfuge, corruption and incompetence. "We don't care," snaps Foreign Minister U Win Aung, even while he waffled in his speech at the recent United Nations millennium summit of more than 150 Presidents, Prime Ministers, monarchs and other top functionaries. This is how he dismissed the legitimate criticism of the Burmese situation by the United States, United Kingdom and the European Union.

U Win Aung told the UN summit that Myanmar is taking a constructive path while opposing forces were (and are) "embarking on a path to destruction". He asserted: "There is no single formula that could be applied to all countries." He claimed: "Myanmar is building a genuine and durable democratic system in our own way and yet there are some who like to stir up the tranquil waters..." All these swirl of events have come in the wake of the house arrest and detention behind padlocked doors at the residence of Aung San Suu Kyi on University Avenue in Yangon, 10 days after the motorcade 'march' (or drive) beyond the outer perimeter of Yangon, led by her with 15 National

the honesty and intrepidity of the Nobel Peace Prize winner, is the serious and growing dissent which has been spreading within the highest echelons of the junta in the saddle. There is no doubt that the army cabal's internal fissures have acquired ominous undertones.

The army brass, embarrassed and exposed, may be unwittingly finding itself in a catch-22 situation. As understood by the frank public comments of Brigadier General Zin Tun, who is the powerful and articulate Deputy Minister for National Planning and Development, and also, close to the ailing Prime Minister/Defence Minister, Gen Than Shwe. He was summarily dismissed from the highest leadership councils of Burma. His ouster has spurred the undercurrent of dissent.

Brig-Gen Zin Tun indulged in a bout of public 'blasphemy'. For, he spoke of the lack of economic progress in Burma today. He said: "May be this is because we are a little shut-down from the world. We still have a lot of restrictions compared with other countries. But we are bringing the barriers down".

Brig-Gen Zin Tun was extremely critical of the current investment climate in the country. He underlined that the GDP growth was six and not 10 per cent (as claimed by Yangon). He was acerbic in his comments on Burma's Investment Commission, once a conglomeration of holy cows, though now in a state a monumental mess. Its chairman, deputy chairman and secretary were all dismissed in 1999 for ineptitude, corruption and endemic philandering, as reports point out.

Analysts suggest that what matters most to the army brass today is the state of bilateral relations and growing trade with her two giant and populous neighbours: India and China. The cabal is almost impervious to what US, UK and EU declare in their fulminations. Both Beijing and New Delhi have been discreet in their relations with Yangon. India and China have skirted the unflagging campaign by Suu Kyi. The Indian Government behaves as if she and the pro-democracy movement does not exist.



The junta has banned internet and modem. Freedom of expression is denied. People simply disappear

mation of the democratic struggle or day to day life. They spread vicious rumours. San Suu Kyi is denounced as 'a whiteman's wife', among other unprintable things. (She was married to the eminent British Tibetologist, Dr Michael Aris, who died of cancer over two years ago in London. Despite multiple appeals from all over the world, the junta refused him a visa). Equally significantly, what is bothering the isolated and insular army brass in addition to

Suu Kyi again stopped from leaving

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22/9

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AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON, Sept. 21. — Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi was prevented from leaving by train for Mandalay today while five truckloads of party supporters were carted off by military police at the station, diplomats and witnesses said.

Mrs Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy deputy chairman, Mr Tin Oo, were prevented from boarding the first three trains out of Yangon to the northern city and former capital, 720 km north of Yangon.

Mrs Suu Kyi had vowed to again defy the junta's ban on travel outside the capital.

Military police prevented journalists and diplomats from entering Yangon's central station to see the Nobel laureate and her deputy, diplomatic sources said.

A British diplomat who was seen trying to enter the station was also asked to leave. Passengers could go in after showing their tickets.

The train's scheduled departure time of 4.00 p.m. was changed to 5.30 p.m., an official said.

Mr Tin Oo had earlier told party supporters they would travel to the former capital Mandalay to investigate reports that party members had been prevented from engaging in political activities, that National League for Democracy offices had been shut down and that party signs had been taken down by police.

Before Mrs Suu Kyi arrived at the station, about 100 of her supporters were herded into five trucks by military police at the station and taken to an undisclosed location, eyewitnesses said.

All shops and businesses surrounding the station were closed amid tight security. About two dozen traffic policemen and some 100 plainclothes policemen were deployed around the station.

An NLD official said Mrs Suu Kyi had reached the station without incident. Then she was stopped.

The junta disapproves of the Nobel Peace laureate going outside Yangon and has physically blocked her on several occasions, the latest being on 24 August when she tried to drive to a southern town.

THE STATESMAN

200

UN envoy for negotiations in Myanmar

THE NATION
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

BANGKOK, Sept 22. — The special UN representative, Mr Razali Ismail, will visit Yangon next month to encourage the Junta to resume political dialogue with the Opposition.

Mr Razali will be in Yangon from 6 to 8 October and will meet the ruling State Peace and Development Council's secretary, Mr Khin Nyunt, and Opposition leader Ms Aung San Suu Kyi. This will be his second visit to Myanmar after his June visit failed to get the two sides to the negotiating table.

Mr Razali will seek an update on the human-rights situation in Myanmar and prepare a report for the UN General Assembly's session next month, expected to adopt a resolution against Myanmar.

A Bangkok-based diplomat said the UN secretary general, Mr Kofi Annan, wished to see the Junta resume political dialogue with the Opposition. Otherwise, he said, the Junta would face more international pressure and a ruling from the International Labour Organisation in November on sanctions over Myanmar's forced-labour policy. Earlier this month, the international community had criticised Yangon's renewed restrictions on Ms Suu Kyi's activities. The Junta last week lifted some of the restrictions on Ms Suu Kyi, allowing diplomats to visit her.

The deputy assistant to the US secretary of state was in Bangkok recently to preside over the meeting of US ambassador in the region to review the US diplomacy towards the region. They also expressed concern over the situation in Myanmar.

THE STATESMAN

3 SEP 2007

INTERNATIONAL ✓

Suu Kyi under house arrest again

2200
S. E. Asia
Myanmar
H.D. 16

YANGON, SEPT. 22. The Myanmar pro-democracy leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, and members of her party's central executive committee were placed under a *de facto* house arrest again today after being removed from Yangon train station early in the morning, official sources said.

The head of the National League for Democracy, its deputy party leader, Mr. Tin Oo, and other party leaders were confined to their houses on "temporary detention," a government source said.

The NLD leaders will not be allowed to leave their homes for the time being, and no diplomats or journalists will be allowed to visit them. — AFP

Trains were full, says Junta

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, SEPT. 22. The Myanmar Junta thwarted the attempt of the pro-democracy leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, to travel out of Yangon on Thursday claiming that the trains to Mandalay, her destinations, were 'full'.

"Apparently upset that there were no seats available on a train from Yangon to Mandalay... Ms. Suu Kyi lashed out at a station cleaning crew before being asked to leave by station authorities," the military authorities said in a statement.

According to the statement, the Government had tried to arrange for tickets for Ms. Suu Kyi and her supporters in vain. "These tickets are in high demand, and normally require a three-day advance purchase."

"When told that all seats on the train had been sold, Ms. Suu Kyi and her party remained in the station, refusing to leave at clos-

ing time. They became abusive toward the station clearing staff and had to be escorted from the building..."

The decision to prevent Ms. Suu Kyi comes close on the heels of another incident where the NLD chief was stopped on the road outside Yangon while travelling out for party work. That stand-off ended on September 2.



As expected, the latest developments have prompted severe criticism from the Western world.

"This blatant, heavy-handed action is only the latest outrage committed against Aung San Suu Kyi and other party leaders by Burmese authorities. It is unacceptable," the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, was quoted as saying.

"The United States holds the Burmese Government responsible for their (activists) welfare and calls for immediate restoration of their freedom of movement and access to others, including foreign diplomats."

"Aung San Suu Kyi is a beacon of hope to the long-suffering people of Burma whose dream of a just, democratic society has been denied for too long by a repressive regime," Ms. Albright's statement added.

THE HINEL

Junta prevents Suu Kyi's supporters from opening party office on anniversary

YANGON: Military authorities kept opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi under virtual house arrest and barred her supporters from opening the headquarters of her party on its 12th anniversary on Wednesday.



Aung San Suu Kyi

The National League for Democracy (NLD) usually commemorates September 27 with a large party meeting. But an NLD official said on Tuesday the party had cancelled this year's event as Ms Suu Kyi and other leaders had been confined to their homes by the authorities.

NLD members who tried to open the party office were told by security officers on duty outside that it was closed on Wednesday and would be opened on Thursday. No reason was given for the closure. "I'm very disappointed," said

an annoyed NLD member. "We're coming here simply to gather, not to cause any problem."

A trickle of NLD supporters which arrived at the party office for a planned lunch were turned away by the over 40 plainclothes military intelligence officers and special branch police. Ms Suu Kyi and eight other central executive committee members of the NLD have been under virtual house arrest since Friday after she made her second attempt in a month to travel upcountry.

On Tuesday, the U.S. raised the issue of Myanmar at the UN in New York. However, Russia, China and Malaysia avoided the issue. In Washington, U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright pledged that she would not admit defeat in her diplomatic campaign in support of Ms Suu Kyi. Ms Albright said in testimony to Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the senate foreign relations committee, that she had raised the issue with foreign officials consistently and systematically. (Agencies)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

28 SEP 2000

Where does he go from here?

DOES MR. Anwar Ibrahim have a future in the politics of Malaysia? The answer to this question is an open one, but it is pretty certain that the former Deputy Prime Minister, convicted of sodomy on August 8, will continue to inspire Opposition politics in Malaysia.

His conviction in the sodomy trial for nine years (Mr. Anwar is already serving a six-year sentence on corruption charges) hardly came as a surprise. Rejection of the charges against him (they relate to "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" with his wife's former driver) would have, however, generated shock waves.

Right through his trial, the one-time Finance Minister and deputy to the all-powerful Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, has remained defiant. All his statements have been critical of the Government, which would lead one to believe that the last has not been heard of the man.

"He will remain the symbol for far-reaching changes in the country," Mr. Lim Kit Siang, Chairman of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), told *The Hindu* from Kuala Lumpur. Admitting that the process of democratisation was in a flux, the Opposition politician maintained that Mr. Anwar had been given a "very harsh, very cruel, very unfortunate sentence".

In Mr. Kim's view, the conviction of Mr. Anwar was anticipated. However, the severity of the sentence (two terms of "six plus nine" to run concurrently) was "completely unexpected". "The sentence just goes to show the level of persecution in the trial. It was a political trial all the way," Mr. Kim said.

Even Singapore's Senior Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, has been quoted as saying that Dr. Mahathir had made a series of blunders in the Anwar affair which cost him dearly. The former Prime Minister, while on a visit to Kuala Lumpur, said: "I think Dr. Mahathir paid a heavy price and I feel sorry for him... he made several errors of judgment which I felt were most unfortunate." "I thought that (Mr. Anwar's arrest under the Internal Security Act) was the beginning of a series of blunders... it should never have been that way, it should have been a straightforward criminal



Does Mr. Anwar Ibrahim have a future in the politics of Malaysia? AMIT BARUAH seeks some answers.

charge... next disaster was the blue (Mr. Anwar's now famous black) eye." Mr. Lee was quoted as saying, "My sympathies are with him (Dr. Mahathir). I am sorry for Anwar too because he had so many things going for him," the Senior Minister stated during a ground-breaking visit to Malaysia.

Mr. Anwar himself has been stinging in response to his trial. His plea for recusal of the judge having been rejected, Mr. Anwar read a statement in open court attacking the

Government and accusing Dr. Mahathir of hungering for power. "There has been no criminal trial in this court, only political persecution... I have steadfastly maintained that I am the victim of a political conspiracy through a web of intrigue orchestrated by the maestro Dr. Mahathir..." he alleged.

"The proceedings during the trial reveal the deplorable methods used by the police, the absurdity of our adversarial system of justice, malicious prosecution and corruption involving the ruling clique. Dr.

Mahathir's lust for power is insatiable," he maintained.

For their part, senior Malaysian Government functionaries have defended their justice system. Responding to an American statement, the Malaysian Foreign Ministry said: "It is unacceptable for others to cast aspersions on or to doubt Malaysia's judicial system."

At another plane, the Industry and Trade Minister, Ms. Rafidah Aziz, was quoted as saying that those foreign investors who were concerned about the Anwar issue should stay out of the country. "We don't welcome those who have any doubt about this country... they can look for places that they feel are safer." Ms. Rafidah said at a time when Malaysia is actively looking for fresh sources of foreign investment.

There is little doubt that Dr. Mahathir and his country are victims of an aggressive Western press, who dislike his independent, anti-Western opinions. Such opinion, it needs to be said, could well be motivated. That, however, does not in any way impinge on the Government's conduct in the Anwar case. The rising star of Malaysia was sacked by Dr. Mahathir two years ago and then embroiled in a series of cases in which he now faces the prospect of a daunting 15-year jail term.

The one-time protege of Dr. Mahathir does risk the prospect of fading from public memory. In a sense, it is really up to the forces of political reform in Malaysia to keep Mr. Anwar alive in the public mind. One political observer of the opinion that if and when Dr. Mahathir does depart from the political scene, the prospect of an early release for Mr. Anwar could become a real one. However, that is unlikely to happen in the months and years that lie ahead.

Mr. Anwar, who among other things has been reading and writing in jail, reportedly enjoys singing Hindi film songs. Clearly, he has many long days and nights ahead of him. There has been considerable international support for Mr. Anwar, including from human rights' organisations. Domestic human rights' groups have been equally critical. All this, however, doesn't amount to much for Mr. Anwar in today's Malaysia.

THE HINDU

20 AUG 2000

World angry over Suu Kyi stand-off

REUTERS

27/8
YANGON, Aug. 26. — Myanmar Opposition leader Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi entered the third day of a roadside stand-off with police today as the military government blocking her freedom of movement faced mounting international criticism.

Mrs Suu Kyi and other members of her National League for Democracy spent a second night in two cars by the side of a road south of Yangon. She was stopped by police in Dala when she and other party members tried to drive to the countryside to visit supporters.

It was the first time the 55-year-old Nobel laureate had tried to leave the capital since another standoff two years ago, which ended after 13 days when a dehydrated Mrs Suu Kyi gave up her protest and returned home.

Myanmar says it stopped Mrs Suu Kyi for her own protection because her journey did not have "proper security arrangements".

The NLD, which won elections in 1990 by a landslide but has never been allowed to govern, said in a statement yester-



Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi

day that the group was running short of food and water. It called on local villagers to provide Mrs Suu Kyi and her party with supplies.

Witnesses said the group's cars were parked a short distance off the road where they were stopped. Nearby were an ambulance and policemen. Mrs Suu Kyi stayed in her car, refusing to turn back.

The US state department said in a statement: "The US deplors Myanmar's refusal to allow Mrs Suu Kyi and other NLD leaders to travel freely in their own country. Freedom of movement is a fundamental,

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S & Aza Myanmar SF-11
internationally recognised right. Its denial will increase tensions in Myanmar." It said USA was concerned about the health and safety of the group and would hold the Myanmar authorities accountable for their welfare.

In London, British foreign secretary Mr Robin Cook said he deplored the treatment of Mrs Suu Kyi.

"We urge the authorities to lift these unnecessary and unlawful restrictions immediately, and call on the regime to start talks with...Suu Kyi and the NLD," Mr Cook said in a statement.

The European Union called on Myanmar to lift the travel restrictions.

Amnesty slams detention: Amnesty International has urged Myanmar to allow Mrs Suu Kyi to travel unhindered, saying her detention denotes "general harassment" by the authorities, adds AP from Bangkok.

In a statement late yesterday, the London-based human rights group said the standoff is an attempt by the government to stamp out "peaceful Opposition activities" in Myanmar.

THE STATESMAN

27 AUG 2000

Suu Kyi not to accept medical help

Yangon, Aug. 28 (AP) — Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's health could be in jeopardy while she remains stranded in a swampy, mosquito-infested area in a standoff with the military, her party said today.

But despite the hazard, Suu Kyi will not accept any medical help from the government, the National League for Democracy said, though an ambulance and a medical team were put on standby by the authorities.

Suu Kyi, two other party leaders and 12 youth supporters have been stuck since Thursday in the Yangon suburb of Dala, where police blocked their way to Kungyangon, 50 km south of Yangon, for party organisation work.

The group has spent the last five days and four nights in the grassy open area where the vehicles were shunted by police. They have slept either in the vehicles or in makeshift tents.

NLD chairman Aung Shwe said the vehicles are parked in a muddy field swarming with mosquitoes.

He said four party members brought Suu Kyi's party mosquito repellent, medicine, bedding and plastic sheets today.

Suu Kyi, awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, has long been at odds with Myanmar's military rulers.

She was freed from seven years of house arrest in 1995, but her movements remain restricted.

Her NLD won a landslide victory in the 1990 general election, but the military refused to honour the results. It has since constantly harassed and arrested party members.

Her last attempt to leave Yangon, in 1998, resulted in a similar standoff when she stayed her car for 13 days before returning home on her doctor's advice.

Party leaders fear another long-drawn-out deadlock this time too.

"They are a determined group and we are a resolute group," Nyunt Wai, a senior NLD official, said today. In a protest letter sent today to Gen. Than Shwe, the leader of the Myanmar junta, Aung Shwe said the place where Suu Kyi and others were stopped "was unfit to live and could affect their health. If that happens, the authorities who commanded the restriction will be held responsible," the letter said.

A government statement today said Suu Kyi was provided "with some beach umbrellas, and a new mobile bathroom to ensure her maximum comfort and well-being."

One photo posted today on the government's website, www.myanmar.com, showed what it said was Suu Kyi and members of her party walking to a house, while other pictures showed members of her group exercising and shopping.

THE TELEGRAPH

29 AUG 2000

WHY? WHY? WHY? Why is the world ignoring Suu Kyi? *SLK*

HAS the world forgotten about the brave and determined leader of the Myanmar people, Aung San Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy won a landslide election in 1990, fully ten years ago, but who has not been allowed by the military junta to assume power by brute force? For the past five days she is camped in the open off a road leading out of the city, prevented from meeting her people and party members, because say the junta, they are concerned for her safety! Our collective foot! She and her small group are in a small field infested with mosquitoes and they expect appreciation and thanks for providing *a new mobile bathroom and beach umbrellas for her use* while denying her necessary medical facilities. Their concern will only end when she leaves the country, something they have been trying to achieve for a long time. They live in hope. The thing to note about military dictatorships and other oppressive regimes is that without a free press, their misdeeds, their hypocrisy and their corruption cannot be exposed as it should be. The last time she attempted to leave Yangon was in 1998 when Suu Kyi was stopped and stayed in her car for 13 days before returning to her home on the insistence of her doctors. No doubt the junta hope to repeat this kind of bullying tactics and force the poor defenceless leader to go back home.

All Suu Kyi was trying to do was to go to Kungyangon, some fifty kilometers south of Yangon for party organisation work. That a routine exercise of the right of democratic citizens to move freely within their country should inspire such fear in the minds of the tyrants in Myanmar is a commentary at once on their sense of insecurity and the power of this frail woman and the influence she exercises over the hearts and minds of her countrymen.

The junta have tried everything to break her spirit, they prevented her from seeing her dying husband in London by simply refusing her permission to return, they regularly arrest her party men and harass them, they prevent access to her by all and every visitor from overseas or even from within the country except under observation. There is no freedom of speech or association, no freedom of the press, no activity other than what is specifically permitted, so that the junta can loot the country in peace. The sad part is that businessmen in other parts of the world who are only interested in contracts and exploitation of Myanmar's mineral and forest wealth are behind their governments to allow the loot to progress without let or hindrance; at regional meetings of heads of governments, there are pious pronouncements about how Myanmar is progressing and how the hypocritical leaders of the so-called free world fool themselves that they are in the thick of persuading the corrupt junta to liberalise their regime because they all believe in democracy. Sections of Indian industry profess faith in competition, what they mean to ask for is in fact help to eliminate the competition. On a parity of reasoning the leaders of the world's democracies do not seem to mind if democracy itself becomes extinct in Myanmar so long as the country's wealth flows out to them by arrangement with the junta. And if Suu Kyi's frail frame falls victim to the inhuman treatment she is receiving, they will wring their hands and award her another international recognition — posthumously.

Is there no moral sense left in the world! If there is, why are we not hearing its voice? Why? Why? Why?

THE STATESMAN

30 AUG 2000

No resolution in sight in Suu Kyi standoff

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
YANGON, AUG 30

OPPOSITION leader
Aung San Suu
Kyi stood her
ground in a
roadside test of
wills with



Myanmar's military Wednesday as international pressure mounted for the regime to resolve the week-long standoff. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan urged the authorities to find a peaceful solution to the crisis as the regime showed signs of becoming increasingly irritated over the confrontation. Annan said the situation "underlines the necessity for national reconciliation" and urged the two sides to "engage as soon as possible in a substantive political dialogue."

Aung San Suu Kyi and a dozen supporters have spent six nights camped in their vehicles in the countryside outside Yangon after being stopped Thursday as they tried to reach a meeting of the party's youth wing.

INDIAN EXPRESS

31 AUG 2000

WILL NO ONE LISTEN?

Is Suu Kyi's *crie de coeur* in vain?

IT used to be said of communists that they thrived on increasing misery. Keeping their people in ignorance and without the benefit of education was merely a refinement on the reasonable premise that an uneducated population is unable to distinguish between information and propaganda. Authoritarian regimes, whether communist or of any other persuasion, particularly military dictatorships, share this perception, their hatred of communism notwithstanding. The military junta of Myanmar is no exception. And thanks to the indifference of the world, this has been going on for twelve years. In a remarkable video clip smuggled out of that unfortunate land, Aung San Suu Kyi, the acknowledged leader of her people, has made specific charges fleshing out her frequent pleas for help from the civilised world to pressure the military junta to relax their iron grip on her people. Barely three days ago, they had angrily dismissed yet another international appeal to respect human rights. Suu Kyi has responded with specific charges.

In a candid comment one has learnt to expect from her, Suu Kyi charges her tormentors with interfering with education; generations of young Myanmarese, she says, are without proper education. Universities are shut and medical and engineering colleges are open only to the children of the New Class, the military. Suppression has intensified. Asean countries have held the view that to influence the junta, trade and commerce with that country should be encouraged; experience has shown that they were wrong, grievously wrong. Anyone wanting to do business with Myanmar has only to contact established military channels, settle with the colonels and proceed to business. This has not changed. There are Indian businessmen who will swear that there are no restrictions in Myanmar, they are at ease because they have clear consciences, clear of everything except self-interest. They point to Asean businessmen who do the same and their governments encourage them. President Clinton who read the riot act to chief executive Musharraf of Pakistan is apparently not too concerned about Myanmar as it does not impinge on American interests.

Twelve years is but a speck of history in a nation's life, it is however enough to inflict irreparable damage on a young generation. The stifling atmosphere is leading to frustration among the young but also among the not so young who see no hope of their voice being heard where it matters, in the international community. Burma, that is Myanmar, is rich in natural resources, and this appeals to the poor in spirit who wish to see nothing beyond immediate gains. Tourists are encouraged and are able to purchase gems, handicrafts and other items without too much fuss so long as they do not engage in any concern for human rights or contact anyone in the Pro-Democracy movement. All military regimes have a flawed vision, some have no vision at all and Myanmar falls into the latter category. The calm on the surface is unnatural. It should be remembered that monks, Buddhist monks, led the earlier struggles for democracy and liberty; if the junta will not do business with Suu Kyi, they will one day face the wrath of monks who will articulate the anger and frustration of an increasing number of their people. The result will be a blood-bath, if there are no safety valves, there will be an explosion. And if there is any justice in this world, it will encompass those who so shamelessly join the junta in exploiting the ordinary peace loving people of this nation. Will no country in the world listen to Suu Kyi's *crie de coeur*?

THE STATESMAN

7 MAY 2000

After 10 years, Burma still waits

BY JOHN J. BRANDON

Washington: Ten years ago Saturday, democrats won a landslide election victory in Burma over the military government. Rather than honour that victory by the National League for Democracy, the military ignored the results and tightened its grip on power. Burma's government, renamed the State Peace and Development Council in 1997, justified the annulment by saying that it was the only institution able to keep the country together, maintain order and promote economic development.

Despite such claims, Burma's people have paid a heavy price. Political, economic and social conditions have grown worse in the past decade. The military has refused to engage in any serious political reform, including establishing a dialogue with the National League for Democracy and its leader, the Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. After spending six years under house arrest, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's movements remain strictly confined. Her party members have been muted through intimidation, imprisonment and torture.

Inflation in Burma is high. The generals appear to have neither the interest nor the ability to deal with the country's economic difficulties. Burma is beset by social ills. Around 40 per cent of the national budget is spent on the military — at the expense of social services, particularly education and health. The United Nations Development Program reports that only 25 per cent of Burma's schoolchildren complete basic education, while 30 per cent of children never go to school at all. Universities have been closed for most of the past decade to preempt student protest. There is a backlog of around one million students waiting for universities to reopen. The health care system has collapsed because of a serious shortage of medical supplies and personnel. Burma spends only 0.2 per cent of its budget on its healthcare system — an average of 50 cents a person. Child mortality, malnutrition and the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus and other deadly diseases are increasing.

Yet the military finds itself more powerful now than it has ever been because it dominates the country's politics and economy. Events elsewhere give the junta little incentive to yield power to a civilian government — the disintegration of Yugoslavia, South Korea's prosecution of two former presidents for corruption and abuse of power and now former President Suharto and his generals in Indonesia being called to account for alleged corrupt practices and human rights abuses.

The junta has all the power, but Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy have all the legitimacy. The only way a democratic form of government can emerge without a popular revolt is through compromise. The generals will have to allow it to happen.

Bringing this about will not be easy. Burma's military rulers have many enemies because they have mistreated the people. The generals fear retribution if they lose power. Shortly after the 1990 election, a former National League for Democracy leader said that no revenge would be sought against the military for its harsh actions against civilian demonstrators. If a political dialogue is to develop, such assurances need to be repeated. This will not be popular with some in Burma's democracy movement. But without such compromise, the political deadlock will remain.

*By arrangement with the
International Herald Tribune*

THE ASIAN AGE

27 MAY 2000

BURMA IS READY FOR

DEMOCRACY

AA 3/3
At the National League for Democracy headquarters in Rangoon, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese Opposition leader and 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner, spoke with BERNARD KRISHNER, publisher of Cambodia Daily, after she addressed about 300 party members at the party's Union Day anniversary celebration.

Q: What was the main message that you conveyed, and what additional things would you like to say to your people?

A: In commemorating Union Day, I talked about the fact that unity cannot be built without mutual trust and understanding, and that there is no hope for peace or prosperity unless there is unity. So you have to start with unity of a nation.

Q: How would you gauge the level of your support today inside Burma?

A: I would not like to think of it in terms of my support as such. I think we should think of it in terms of how strong the forces of democracy are. I think I could say with great confidence that 90 per cent of the people of Burma want democracy.

Of course, of those who want democracy, those who really dare to go out and fight for it politically are in the minority because there is so much oppression by the military government and there is tremendous fear. But we have a very strong group of people at the core, as you could see today at the meeting.

Since about the autumn of 1998, when we founded the Committee of the People's Parliament, it has been very difficult for us to hold any of our commemorative ceremonies. Usually these ceremonies are an opportunity for us to deliver political messages and to demonstrate our unity, but from the beginning in September 1998 of the Committee of the People's Parliament and throughout 1999 the authorities tried to intercept every one of our ceremonies.

For example, last year you would not have been allowed in. They had roadblocks in front of our headquarters and they prevented all foreigners from coming. And they prevented certain representatives from other political parties from coming. Diplomats were also prevented from coming. Even members of our party had to produce their national registration cards and were asked to prove they were members of our party.

Huge roadblocks kept our people away. This went on through all of last year. But still our people kept coming, and I think partly perhaps as a result of such perseverance among our members, the authorities have decided that there is not much to be gained by continuing this kind of policy. Last month, when we had our indepen-

I could say with great confidence that 90 per cent of the people of Burma want democracy. Of course, of those who want democracy, those who really dare to go out and fight for it politically are in the minority because there is so much oppression by the military government and there is tremendous fear

dence day ceremonies, they allowed in diplomats and foreigners and they did not use roadblocks.

Q: Some people argue that not all countries are ready for democracy. What is your argument to support your contention that the Burmese people are ready to live under a democracy?

A: If you want to put it that way, then you can say that in a sense a democracy is never perfect; even in the United States democracy is not perfect. We could also argue that the Japanese were not ready for democracy in 1945, but they were given democracy and they have worked and lived with democracy.

Sometimes — and this may be an arguable point — I think in some ways the people of Burma are more ready for democracy now, a lot more ready now, than the people of Japan were ready for democracy in 1945, because in Japan there was never a struggle or movement for democracy. Democracy was simply handed to them on a plate as part of the arrangements after the war.

Now with regard to Burma, apart from the fact that Burma spent quite some time under British colonial administration, which did structure some forms of democracy, we became independent as a democratic nation, as a parliamentary democracy.

So we have had experience of democracy in practice, and apart from that, even if we leave aside the long years under Burma's Socialist Program Party — when the desire of the people for a more open society, for a return to democratic institutions was never crushed—we have now been struggling for democracy actively for the last 12 years.

Q: What is your feeling about Japanese policy toward Burma?

A: We find that a lot of people in Japan who are very sympathetic to us and to our cause, if they get to know about it. There are very, very supportive groups of Japanese people and organisations. But there is not enough information about what is going on in Burma.

Q: What about the Japanese government?

A: The government is quite often influenced by business considerations. But it is not that alone. I am inclined to think there is a tradition among Japanese governments, whichever government they may be, to try to establish good relations with whoever is in power in whichever nation. And perhaps that, as much as — and perhaps even much more than — the influence of the Japanese business lobby would incline the Japanese government toward trying to establish good relations with the military regime.

Q: Do you think that investments in Burma might be jeopardised if democracy came to Burma? Would a new democratic regime continue to honour such investment agreements?

A: We are not against business at all. This is the mistake a lot of people make. They think the National League for Democracy and the democratic forces in general are anti-business. We are not anti-business. We are for a free-market economy. It is part of our party platform. But now we don't have a genuine market economy. It isn't a free-market economy at all. It is very much biased in favour of those who are connected to the regime.

So we object to investments now not because we are against investments per se, but because we don't think this is the right time. By investing now, business is supporting the military regime. The real benefits of investments now go to the military

regime and their connections. They go to just a small, very privileged elite. And the people get very little.

Q: How can people who wish to give humanitarian aid really help the needy Burmese people without going through the military regime?

A: The first question to ask is how effective is this humanitarian aid? What do they mean, exactly, by humanitarian aid? What kind of aid is that? And how many people is it supposed to help? In general, whatever humanitarian aid that non-governmental organisations may be able to give is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed in Burma. What we really need in Burma is substantive change, the kind of change that will enable people to help themselves.

Q: What are the most serious economic problems in Burma?

A: The economy is in a mess. There are a number of major problems which have brought the economy to such a state. There is no macroeconomics view at all on the part of the military regime, and there are the obvious problems like the extremely unrealistic exchange rate of the kyat. And then there were all those unproductive industries which are legacies of the socialist regime and there is the inability of the civilian administration, the civil servants, to operate freely. Everywhere the military is dipping its finger in and not being efficient.

Q: Do you think membership in the Association of South East Asian nations is having a positive or negative impact on Burma?

A: Asean is not having any positive impact on Burma. Two years ago, before they admitted Burma as a permanent member, they made the point that once Burma was a member of Asean it would be more reasonable and they would be in a better position to influence Burma and guide it along the right lines.

We argued that we did not think this was the case. What we thought was that once Burma had been made a full member of Asean, which is what they wanted, then they wouldn't try any more to be good boys—they would be more oppressive, and they would just go ahead and do what they wanted and they wouldn't really listen to any advice from the members of Asean, and I think that this turned out to be absolutely true. They have turned out to be most oppressive between 1998 and now. The oppression increased noticeably after they became a member of Asean.

By arrangement with the International Herald Tribune

THE ASIAN AGE

- 3 MAR 2000

Despite junta's efforts Myanmar's economy and society stagnate

YANGON: The Asian diplomat sports a massive bandage on his right thumb, which, after shaking hands, he explains with a wince, "softball. We have a lot of time for playing softball here".

Myanmar is not the most active diplomatic posting these days. The economy is stagnant. And the political stalemate that has kept the country a pariah-state for the past decade is arguably going nowhere.

Western democracies and multilateral aid organizations stopped all aid to Myanmar in September, 1988, in the aftermath of a bloody military crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations that left hundreds, if not thousands, dead in the streets of Yangon. The ruling junta, after staging a general election in May 1990, that provided a landslide victory to the National League for Democracy (NLD) party led by opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, has refused to hand over power to the elected politicians for the past ten years, and is obviously not about to step aside anytime soon.

One indication is the growth of the Myanmar army from 180,000 in 1988 to 400,000 now. Another is that over the past 12 years, the junta's involvement in all sectors of the economy has increased, diplomats said.

When the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), formerly called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), came to power in 1988, it discarded socialism, or the so-called "Burmese way to socialism," introduced by former military strongman General Ne Win, as the government's guiding ideology.

They ended Myanmar's political and economic isolation — or tried to — by inviting foreign investments and tourists to the country and invested heavily in infrastructure, including 108 new bridges, new highways, railways and more than 100 new dams.

The junta has persuaded 17 out of 18 insurgencies to end their armed struggle against the government.

"For the first time in modern history, we have brought peace and stability to this country," said Lieutenant Colonel Hla Min, deputy head of the department of international affairs at the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS). Peace and security have come at a price. Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Myanmar's national independence hero Aung San, is still perceived by western democracies as the rightful ruler, along with the NLD's elected legislators.

As long as the junta refuses to start a political dialogue with Ms Suu Kyi and the NLD, western aid is on hold. The junta, while successful at road building with corvee labour, has failed in providing social services. Only 75 per cent of the country's primary school-age children are attending classes and the country's universities have been closed since 1996, after college students in Yangon staged a peaceful demonstration.

While third/fourth-year university classes reopened last year, the junta is still uncertain whether it will allow first/second-year classes to commence this May, the start of the school year. "Our priority is to keep the students out of politics," said Lt. Col Hla Min. Any sign of disturbances between now and May and the universities will stay-closed.

Myanmar's pariah status abroad makes it difficult for aid organizations still working in the country to do their job. "We can't raise interest in an international campaign for condoms to stop the spread of HIV/Aids," said Mr Owen Wrigley, in charge of the HIV/Aids programme at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

"I need 50 million condoms over the next two years to fight the epidemic but nobody's a donor," he said. The spread of HIV/Aids has been rapid in Myanmar, a country with a huge drug addiction problem and a growing prostitution problem. (DPA)