

HD-17
20/12

Better late than never

S B Arun
- m. enman

“IN PHYSICAL stature she is petite and elegant, but in moral stature she is a giant... big men are scared of her. Armed to the teeth and they still run scared,” said Bishop Desmond Tutu of the Myanmar leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi.

Ms. Suu Kyi's personal resilience in the battle for democracy was acknowledged recently by a gathering of fellow Nobel laureates. The leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) was, however, missing. She lives under restricted conditions in Yangon.

Bishop Desmond Tutu's tribute to a remarkable woman only goes to show the kind of impact the struggle for democracy in Myanmar continues to have on the rest of the world.

Notwithstanding the pressures from the international community, the dynamics of

The best thing about the dialogue between the junta and Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar is that it is taking place at all, writes Amit Baruah.

political development in Myanmar have a logic of their own. Since the NLD won elections in 1990, the ruling military junta reviled Ms. Suu Kyi for more than a decade, but now has been holding talks with her since last year.

Analysts remain sceptical about the course of the talks between the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) even though Mr. Razali Ismail, U.N. envoy and Malaysian diplomat, has given a positive spin to the dialogue process after his latest visit in the early part of December.

“We keep hearing about some major development. But nothing seems to happen,” one analyst told this correspondent. “The only thing that has so far happened is the release of political prisoners held in jails.”

The most significant comment about the dialogue process, perhaps, has come from a former Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Kabun Muto, who met Ms. Suu Kyi on December 4. “It is not that dialogue has begun,” he quoted Ms. Suu Kyi

as telling him. “It is a period in which both sides are attempting to erase mistrust,” Mr. Muto said about the NLD leader's discussions.

Deciphering the progress in the dialogue process in Myanmar is a difficult task. The best thing about the dialogue is that it is taking place at all — neither side has officially commented on the nature, scope and progress of the talks. That lack of information, however, is not so welcome for those who believe that the process is slow and an effort by the military Government to buy time and shore up its position internationally.

Since the NLD won the elections in 1990 and the military refused to honour the results, it has become clear that currently the SPDC faces no

interlocutor.

Myanmar's economic situation continues to pose problems — just three people in 20 have access to electricity and one person in 200 has a telephone and the rate of taxation is among the lowest in the world. A precarious economic situation does put pressure on the military Government — an unravelling economy can do to the SPDC what democratic pressure has been unable to.

Foreign assistance and capital are required in Myanmar. But, so far, while the international community has been supportive of the dialogue process, aid has

The SPDC statement and the quote attributed to the former Japanese Minister seem to tally — that the talks are yet to move beyond the confidence-building stage into discussing the contours of a political settlement. Whether such statements are designed not to raise expectations from the dialogue will not really be known given the secrecy that surrounds the talks.

One thing is, however, clear. The military — if at all it decides to share power with the NLD — will ensure that its position in any new dispensation is ensured. The military will seek to institutionalise its role in a future Government.

There has been a recent shake-up in the SPDC and the Government, with several Ministers being retired. Two top Ministers were sent home on unstated grounds of corruption.



prospect of popular, mass protests that will lead to its ouster from power. It has considerable international support from China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the recent Japanese decision to extend assistance for the reconstruction of a hydel project is being seen as positive for the governing council.

However, the NLD and Ms. Suu Kyi cannot be wished away through nasty media attacks and statements of condemnation. The SPDC did delay dealing with Ms. Suu Kyi, but today the dialogue with her has established the daughter of Aung San as a credible

not flowed. The Japanese, in supporting the reconstruction of a hydel project, are indicating that more could come if the dialogue process makes progress. In a rare statement on the dialogue process, the SPDC said in response to concerns expressed by Nobel laureates that it was working with Ms. Suu Kyi to arrive at a political settlement. “Today, we are in the process of joining hands, walking on the same path toward our common objective,” the ruling Council said.

“It is now necessary to develop, step by step, the confidence-building talks between the SPDC and the NLD into meaningful dialogues.”

It would appear this was an internal issue and had little to do with the dialogue process.

The troika of the SPDC Chairman, Senior-General Than Shwe, the SPDC Vice-Chairman and Army Chief, Gen. Maung Aye, and the intelligence chief and Secretary-One, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, is very much in control of the country.

There may be differences of opinion, but that is not reflected in public. In the final analysis, the name of the game in Myanmar is rather simple — wait and see. So far, the talks have not collapsed and the two parties remain in contact. Friends of Myanmar should cross their fingers.

China, Myanmar sign border security pact

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, DEC. 16. The Chinese President, Mr. Jiang Zemin, has concluded a successful four-day visit to Myanmar — the first by a Chinese President since the military junta took power in Yangon in 1988.

In an open endorsement of the military Government, Mr. Jiang said that each country was entitled to choose its own development path suited to its conditions.

The Chinese Government, Mr. Jiang told his interlocutors in Myanmar, would always support Myanmar's efforts to safeguard social stability and promote economic development. A border security pact was signed by the two countries during the Jiang visit (apart from several other agreements), but few actual details are available.

Giving an account of the Myanmar visit, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, stated that both countries had agreed to expand their cooperation in infrastructure construction and human and natural resources' development.

Already, China has constructed several strategic roads in Myanmar and is likely to play a greater role in this regard in the future. The Chinese are interested in linking their province of Yunnan by road to a Myanmar port thereby giving Chinese goods access to the Indian Ocean. In his account of the visit, Mr. Tang said Myanmar leaders had expressed the hope that China would play a more important role in safeguarding international and regional peace and development.

On the regional situation, the Chinese President told the Myanmar State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Chairman, Senior Gen. Than Shwe, that Beijing and ASEAN countries had maintained good relations.

China, Mr. Tang stressed, supported ASEAN's integration (a reference to the need for newer ASEAN members like Myanmar to catch up with more developed ASEAN nations) and would continue to strengthen relations with these countries.

According to the Chinese Foreign Minister, Myanmar leaders had informed Mr. Jiang that they would spare no effort to support the

S of Asia - Myanmar
further development of relations between China and ASEAN.

The President's visit, he said, had helped in enhancing understanding, friendship and cooperation between China and Myanmar.

There is little doubt that Mr. Jiang's visit to Myanmar is an important one and can be seen as the culmination of a series of visits of senior Chinese leaders to Yangon. Top leaders from Myanmar, including Senior Gen. Than Shwe, have already visited Beijing.

China sees Myanmar as a strategic ally and cannot be unaware of Indian interests in that country. However, as can be expected, there were no overt references to India during the course of the visit.

A section of the Myanmar establishment is said to be wary about getting too close to China, but little of that was in evidence during the Jiang visit.

Reports from Yangon indicate that apart from Gen. Than Shwe, the Army Chief, Gen. Maung Aye, and the intelligence chief, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, received Mr. Jiang on his arrival.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

17 DEC 200

Burmese junta offers to share power with Suu Kyi

BY SUTIN WANNABOVORN

Bangkok (Thailand), Sept. 6: Burma's military junta has proposed a power sharing arrangement with Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and is awaiting her response, a Thai source said on Thursday quoting a top Burmese general.

This apparent breakthrough in national reconciliation talks was disclosed by the junta's No. 3 leader, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, during his talks this week with Thai defence minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh in Bangkok. The source, an Army officer

present during the talks, said Mr Khin Nyunt told Chavalit: "There has been talk on sharing (power) and we hope to hear good news soon if the other side accepts the proposal." Mr Khin Nyunt did not elaborate, the source said.

Opposition and government leaders in Burma had no comment immediately. Both sides have in the past refused to discuss the talks.

The source quoted Mr Khin Nyunt as saying that the junta has "established a channel of contact and contacts have been made every couple of weeks."

The contacts were not necessarily direct talks between Mr Khin Nyunt and Ms Aung San Suu Kyi but the messages were sent back and forth through intermediaries, the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Mr Khin Nyunt's reported comments are the first solid information to emerge from the closed-door talks going on between the military junta and Ms Aung San Suu Kyi since October.

The talks were kickstarted by a special United Nations envoy Razali Ismail, who last month

ended his fifth visit to Burma. Mr Khin Nyunt was in Thailand from Monday to Wednesday and held talks with Mr Chavalit, a former Army chief known to be close to Burmese generals.

On Thursday, the *Bangkok Post* newspaper quoted Mr Chavalit as saying that he had a positive feeling about Burma. "We expect to see every party in Burma join together to set up a government to work for the people and the country," Mr Chavalit was quoted as saying. The *Nation* newspaper quoted Mr Chavalit as saying: "He

(Khin Nyunt) told me that everything is good and maybe we will have good news soon. I believe that the talks will succeed as the Burmese leaders are sincere and serious in bringing peace to the country."

The current group of generals came to power in 1988 after crushing a pro-democracy movement that left hundreds dead.

The regime called general elections in 1990 but refused to honour the results after Ms Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won convincingly.

Instead, National League for Democracy members were jailed and harassed or put under house arrest.

Recently, in a goodwill gesture, the government released in batches nearly 160 political prisoners from jails and 32 NLD elected representatives. Ms Suu Kyi, the 1990 Nobel peace laureate, however, remains under virtual house arrest.

Ms Suu Kyi's plight and the political restrictions in Burma have evoked scathing criticism of the junta in the West as well as economic sanctions. (AP)

Burma junta releases 5 ^{AP-9} more activists ¹¹⁸

Rangoon, July 31: Burma's military regime freed five political prisoners on Tuesday who won seats in the 1990 general election swept by the Opposition party of Ms Aung San Suu Kyi.

An official statement said that the prisoners were freed at 10 am from various correctional facilities in the country and were all in good health.

Party sources of Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy confirmed the releases and said most of the prisoners had been jailed in 1996 under a security law.

The official statement named the prisoners released as Khin Maung Win, Chit Htwe, Ohn Maung, Aung Myint and Nyunt Aye.

Since January of this year, 158 political prisoners have been freed from jails across the country.

They include seven elected legislators, following secret talks between Ms Suu Kyi and the military regime, considered the most significant move toward reconciliation in a decade of political deadlock in the country. (AP)

Suu Kyi skips father's memorial, doubts over talks with junta

REUTERS

YANGON, July 19. - Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi failed to turn up for a national ceremony, commemorating her father's death anniversary, leading to speculations that talks with the military government are in trouble.

The leader was represented by senior party member, U Lwin, who laid a wreath on her behalf at Martyr's Mausoleum in central Yangon.

The annual ceremony was attended by thousands of government officials, civil servants and foreign diplomats.

The ruling military was represented by minister for culture, Win Sein, who laid a wreath on behalf of the government.

Mrs Suu Kyi's party and the junta have been engaged in political negotiations since October last year.

There had been rumours that restrictions on Mrs Suu Kyi, under house arrest since September, would be lifted ahead of today's ceremony.

No information has been released on the progress of the talks and only a handful of foreign diplomats have been given access to her.

Despite her rift with the ruling generals, Mrs Suu Kyi had always attended the ceremony. But diplomats and officials said last week that she had decided not to attend it today.



Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi

Sources said the party planned a low key ceremony at the party's headquarters later in the afternoon.

Earlier this year, diplomatic sources said the talks appeared to have stalled, but subsequent releases of prisoners and a visit by United Nations special envoy, Razali Ismail, stirred hopes that the negotiations were still on track.

Since the talks began in October 2000, 151 political detainees have been released and the party has been given permission to reopen 18 of its branch offices.

Eleven party members were released on the eve of Martyrs' Day, the anniversary of the assassination of Mrs Suu Kyi's father and eight senior officials on July 19, 1947.

Will the Generals prove gentlemen?

HD-12
12/16

The guessing game goes on in Myanmar. However, says Amit Baruah, the recent visit of the U.N. envoy, Mr. Razali Ismail, has raised hopes that the dialogue between the Generals and Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was back on track.



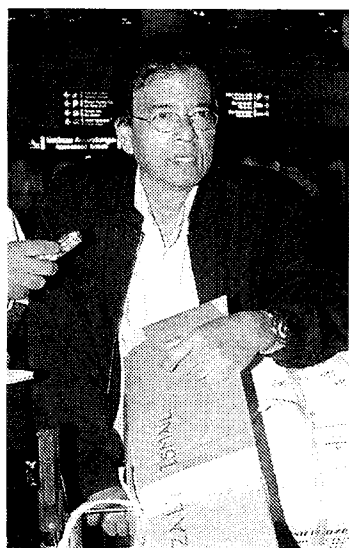
Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's portrait looms large at her party headquarters... can she prevail?

THE GUESSING game goes on in Myanmar. No one is quite sure where the talks between the military junta in Yangon and the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, are headed. A recent four-day visit by the U.N. Secretary-General's special envoy, Mr. Razali Ismail, raised hopes that the dialogue between the Generals and Ms. Suu Kyi was back on track.

The talks between the NLD leader, who for all practical purposes remains under house arrest, and the junta began in October 2000, a revelation made by Mr. Razali, a Malaysian diplomat, in January this year. Since then there has been intense speculation about the trajectory of the talks, with several Western reports suggesting not so long ago that the dialogue was in tatters and that Mr. Razali's entry into Myanmar was being blocked.

Myanmar is a country which is partly hidden from public view and the military Government rarely gives direct information about events and developments taking place in Yangon. The hopeful sign in the dialogue, in fact, is that neither of the two parties — the NLD and the military — has said anything publicly to jeopardise the dialogue. The stakes for both parties are extremely high. And that's why neither of them wants to take the stage and make any pronouncements.

In a statement issued after the visit of Mr. Razali, the U.N. said the special envoy had visited Yangon to "help facilitate progress in the talks between" the Government and Ms. Suu Kyi "for



The U.N. special envoy, Mr. Razali Ismail, on his return to Kuala Lumpur from Myanmar... trying to break the deadlock.

democratisation and national reconciliation in Myanmar". "During his visit, Mr. Razali had important discussions with Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1 of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), and other Government officials. He also had discussions with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the latter's residence," the statement said.

"The Secretary-General hopes that the visit of his special envoy, and the discussions he had during his stay in Yangon, will contribute towards progress in talks. He considers the timely visits of his special envoy to Myanmar as an important

function in discharging his good offices mandate given by the General Assembly," it added.

If the U.N.'s tone was sober, a visiting U.S. diplomat to the region was more hopeful. "It (the dialogue) has been going on for eight months... We expect to see a concrete result in a short while," Mr. Ralph Boyce, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, was quoted as saying in Bangkok.

The apparent reasons for the optimism displayed by Mr. Boyce were not made clear. Other analysts believe that a sign that the talks are going well would be the release of senior NLD cadres being detained by the military Government. The latest release of a couple of senior NLD cadres could be an indicator of forward movement in the talks.

The Bangkok-based All-Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) took a diametrically opposed position to the views expressed by the visiting American official, stating that the progress in the last eight months of dialogue had been "virtually non-existent". "We ask the NLD and SPDC to open up the talks so the people of Burma (Myanmar) and the world can see if there is progress. The current talks are not open. People are frustrated waiting for information while human rights abuses and forced labour are still taking place in the country," an ABSDF spokesman was quoted as saying.

While Japan's decision to approve a \$28.6 million loan to

refurbish a hydel plant in Myanmar has been the subject of much speculation and worry in some international circles, Mr. Boyce made it clear that the U.S. did not see any conflict of purpose between Tokyo and Washington. "We did not disagree... we have our own approach."

In a new report, Amnesty International blasted the Myanmar regime for continuing to use "forced" labour. "The military frequently forces men, women and children from ethnic minorities to carry heavy loads over tough terrain for days or weeks at a time to work on construction projects such as building railways, roads and dams. Hundreds have died from exhaustion and beatings," Amnesty claimed.

The human rights group called on the SPDC to implement a law enacted in October 2000 which banned forced labour. "The SPDC must demonstrate the political will to implement the law. For as long as forced labour is allowed to go on, thousands of victims will continue to flee to Thailand in despair."

Amnesty claimed that the junta was holding 1,850 political prisoners although 100 had been released recently. The group's report also quoted Myanmar's Permanent Representative in Geneva as saying: "The Government has established a Steering Committee at the highest level, headed by Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt... and a human rights committee headed by Colonel Tin Hlaing, Minister for Home Affairs. These bodies are carrying out preparatory work and will pave the way for the establishment, in due course, of a full-fledged institution on promotion and protection of human rights."

Clearly, this recent statement from the Government is a major departure from the past. For its part, the international community, while watching developments in Myanmar, is keeping the pressure on the junta. The focus remains, as ever, on the dialogue between the Generals and Ms. Suu Kyi. All hopes for national reconciliation in Myanmar hinge on the results of these secret talks.

Burma junta frees prisoners, eases grip on Opposition

By AUNG HLA TUN

Rangoon, June 16: Burma's military government has released eight political prisoners and allowed some Opposition party offices to reopen, in a further sign of easing tension between the ruling generals and the pro-democracy movement.

Government sources said the prisoners — who all won parliamentary seats in the 1990 elections won by the National League for Democracy — were released on Thursday. The ruling State Peace and Development Council has never recognised the result of the elections and has detained dozens of Opposition MPs in government "guest houses." A government spokesman said the release of the eight MPs was a result of talks between the military and the NLD.

"Due to an understanding between the SPDC and the NLD party, the eight MPs who stayed at guest houses were allowed to return to their families," the spokesman said. "They were all in

good health." Six of the MPs were members of the NLD, while the other two were from ethnic minority parties.

A senior Opposition leader said the prisoner release "could be" a sign that talks between the generals and NLD leader Suu Kyi were making headway. He added that authorities had also allowed some of the NLD offices closed during a government crackdown in 1998 to reopen. "The government has so far allowed 20 NLD township offices, of the 40 in Rangoon division, to resume operations," the official said. "We are expecting the government to allow more offices to reopen soon, and more prisoner releases," he said.

At UN headquarters a spokesman said Mr Kofi Annan hoped more detainees would soon be freed. Mr Annan "reiterates that there is no alternative to talks between the government and Aung San Suu Kyi to bring about democratisation and national reconciliation in Burma," spokesman Manoel Almeida e Silva said. (Reuters)

5F-12
28/6

UN special envoy meets Suu Kyi

REUTERS

YANGON, June 2. - The UN special envoy to Myanmar met Ms Aung San Suu Kyi today during a visit to Yangon which the international community hopes can revive stalled talks between Ms Suu Kyi and the military government.

Veteran Malaysian diplomat Mr Razali Ismail held talks with Ms Suu Kyi in her lakeside Yangon residence, where she has been held in de facto house arrest since September.

He also met the powerful Lieutenant-general Khin Nyunt, secretary one of the ruling State Peace and Development Council, as well as representatives of some of the country's many ethnic groups.

Mr Razali helped broker the start of dialogue between the government and Ms Suu Kyi on previous visits.

Leading members of the ruling junta have been holding regular meetings with Nobel peace prize winner Ms Suu Kyi since October, raising hopes that the political stalemate that has gripped Myanmar for more than a decade could finally be broken.

THE STATESMAN

5 JUN 2001

Buddhist-Muslim clash in Myanmar

YANGON, May 22. A curfew has been imposed in a northern town here after a riot between Buddhist and Muslim residents last week. Members of the two communities in Toungoo town attacked each other with sticks and stones while several mosques were set on fire. — AP

THE STATEMENT

MYANMAR / DIFFERENCES SURFACE IN JUNTA

Talks with Suu Kyi may collapse

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, MAY 6. The seven-month-old secret dialogue between Myanmar's military Government and the pro-democracy leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, is on the verge of breaking down, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported in its latest issue.

"The junta has deferred numerous requests by United Nations special envoy Razali Ismail — the main catalyst behind the talks — to revisit Burma (Myanmar). Suu Kyi, under virtual house arrest, is said by a source close to Razali to be increasingly frustrated with the secrecy and isolation of the talks..." the magazine claimed.

Another report from Yangon today stated that the secret talks between the junta and Ms. Suu Kyi were in jeopardy as dissenting factions within the military are wary of the prospects of far-reaching reforms.

Last week, Myanmar's Foreign Minister, Mr. U. Win Aung, told reporters in Yangon that the talks were still on track.

"We are not playing games for the sake of the media... this is not a public relations stunt... But we hope that this process, which is very complex and delicate, should be left at a distance right now because the freedom of the country depends on this," he was quoted as saying.

"There is no set time for the dialogue or peace process in Northern Ireland, or in Sri Lanka or the Middle East... This is also not a process where you can start a countdown. This is timeless," the Foreign Minister was quoted as saying.

According to the *Review* article, the opacity surrounding the talks was working to the military junta's advantage.

The "cautious optimism" with which the international community greeted the talks is



A volunteer worker at the headquarters of Myanmar's opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) sits next to a portrait of the party leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, in Yangon. — Reuters

beginning to break down.

"Until April, many in the region — most significantly Japan — had tacitly supported Western-led isolation of the junta as a concerted protest against the regime's abysmal democratic credentials... but in early April, Japan broke ranks with a Western-led 12-year ban on non-humanitarian assistance to Burma (Myanmar) by quietly agreeing to provide a Yen 3.5 billions (\$28 millions) aid package to rehabilitate a hydroelectric dam as a direct

reward for the talks..."

The *Review* claimed that the sun was setting on the talks. "So far, Suu Kyi has remained silent as the talks stall and her negotiating leverage slides. In part that's because she desperately wants the release from prison of her political supporters... with more regional support for the junta in the pipeline, the incentive for the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) is waning."

THE HINDU

Burma attacks UN for 'biased' report

By AUNG HLA TUN

Rangoon, April 19: Burma's military government lashed out on Thursday at the latest United Nations human rights resolution on the country, branding it "derogatory, unfair and partial" and denying accusations of rights abuses.

It also said the resolution would damage "the momentum of cooperation" between the government and the new UN human rights envoy to Burma, Mr Paulo Sergio Pinheiro.

"The resolution is politically motivated and clearly aimed at

exerting continued pressure on the government of Burma, which is a misplaced policy that will in no way contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights," the government said in a statement.

"As a government fully compassionate towards its citizenry, the government of Burma will unwaveringly continue its efforts to improve the life of the people of Burma."

In Geneva on Wednesday, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution which praised Burma's ruling generals for taking part in talks

with pro-democracy Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi but alleged major violations of human rights including executions, mass arrests and forced labour.

The resolution expressed grave concern at what it called "the systematic policy of the government of Burma of persecuting the democratic opposition members and their families, as well as ethnic opposition parties."

It called on the ruling military to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of all political leaders, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Suu Kyi, held under de facto

arrest since September with access to her strictly controlled.

Burma noted the few positive elements in the resolution but said the criticisms were unfair.

"The resolution, except for a few elements, is far from being objective, impartial or fair," it said.

"Even the reflection in the resolution of the positive and encouraging developments in the country is offset in the later part of the resolution by accentuating the unfounded allegations."

The resolution alleged that the government used intimidatory methods. (Reuters)

Junta forges pact in jade for truce, profit

By DANIEL KESTENHOLZ
Die Welt/GUNS

Bangkok, April 19: It is more expensive than diamond, wonderful to cut yet harder than steel, and no two pieces are alike. Jade is mined in northern Burma, and is the most desirable stone in Asia.

The jade trade is bizarre, a kind of roulette, bringing fortune or ruin. As a British commissioner to Burma in the colonial era put it: "the jade trade is an unprofitable antagonism, which requires elucidation, clarification and the light of day."

But the Chinese are obsessed with jade, which they call "heavenly stone" and consider the

bridge between man and the gods, a healing stone that protects against death.

Now the military junta in Burma, desperate for foreign currency, wants to make use of this heavenly stone - epitome of a nation in which gamblers, rebels and smugglers remain the main political protagonists.

"Kyaukseimyo (Jade Country)" in the Christian Kachin region of the country is one of the most inaccessible jungles, which makes the hopes and myths surrounding it all the more fabulous. Those who go in search of this stone need many years of experience and luck. Rough jade, oxidised over millions of years and barely

distinguishable from lumps of granite, is bought raw and recognised by "light windows", sound and feel.

The tens of thousands of jade hunters in the jade mines of Hpakan, where rubble is sorted from riches, engage in a painful "game of patience." If he is not careful, a jade prospector can throw away a fortune with one block of stone. If you are too swift you will stumble, they say in Hpakan. Burma's wild west, also known for its cognac, gambling, girls and AIDS. The roads into jade country are either dust hills or muddy tracks, depending on the season, and are sometimes only

passable by foot, on horseback, or by elephant. The mines regularly flood during the monsoon period. Here, where dynamite fuses are lit with cigarette ends and where safety precautions are too expensive a luxury, an ant-like mass of people drive narrow shafts into the ground.

Daring prospectors dive into water after the most precious river jade. But most of it is mined by hand from tunnels, without pneumatic drills, water pumps or conveyor belts. A human life is worth little here.

There are bandits by the drove. With a little luck, you might reach China or Thailand, where jade blocks are worth small fortunes.

Suu Kyi in court over property dispute case

Yangon, April 23

A COURT today asked Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi to submit a written statement in a property dispute with her elder brother over her inherited home.

On the opening day of the case in the Yangon division court, judge Soe Thein only accepted credentials of lawyers from both sides. He then set the next hearing on May 2 when Suu Kyi will have to present a written statement detailing her defence against her brother, Aung San Oo, who is an American citizen.

Aung San Oo is seeking to establish joint ownership of a two-acre property with a lakeside villa where Suu Kyi has lived for the last 13 years since moving here from Britain to look after her ailing mother. Suu Kyi, who won the Nobel peace prize in 1991 for her democracy struggle, has been confined to that house since September 22 after defying a travel ban imposed by the Myanmar military regime. She did not attend the court session today.

A previous case filed by Aung San Oo for partition of the property was dismissed in January on the grounds that a claimant seeking partition of a property must apply for ownership first.

That case, filed last November, was believed to have had the tacit approval of the Government, which controls courts in Myanmar.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 APR 2001

24 APR 2001

FPD-17

U.N. envoy visit constructive: junta

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, APRIL 6. A three-day visit by the United Nations human rights envoy, Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, to Myanmar, has been described "constructive" by the Foreign Ministry in Yangon.

In a sign that the military Government is more amenable to cooperation with the rest of the world, the Foreign Ministry said: "We consider the visit of Mr. Pinheiro as constructive. We have cooperated with him to our utmost".

Mr. Pinheiro, who met with the National League for Democracy general secretary, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, was permitted to visit the NLD headquarters for talks with senior party leaders.

Mr. Pinheiro's predecessor as U.N. rights' envoy, Mr. Rajsoomer Lallah, was bitterly critical of the military regime. Mr. Lallah, who resigned his job last year, was never given permission to visit Myanmar. Reports from Yangon said that Mr. Pinheiro, a Brazilian academic, had adopted a non-confrontational approach towards the military Government, a posture which must have pleased the Generals in Yangon. In his three-day visit, which concluded on Thursday, the Brazilian also met with Secretary-I, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, the powerful intelligence chief and regarded as the architect of a more open-minded approach.

Interestingly, Mr. Pinheiro was permitted to travel outside the capital to a controversial gas pipeline project, whose construction has invited opprobrium from the human rights' advocates.

There is little doubt that first-hand visits of the kind undertaken by the envoy would help both the international community and the military junta understand each other better.

In the past, there has been little or no communication between an inward-looking military regime and the international community.

THE HINDU

APRIL 6 1988

Junta allows UN envoy to visit Burma

Rangoon, March 30: Burma's military government has given permission for the new United Nation human rights envoy for the country to visit in the first week of April, a senior Burma foreign ministry official said.

"We have given the green light to the visit of the new UN special reporter," the official said.

Diplomatic sources in Rangoon said Brazil's Paulo Serge Pithier would meet representatives of both the military government and the Opposition National League

for Democracy, including its leader Ms Aunt San Us Kyi.

The NOD won Burma's most recent elections, in 1990, by a landslide but has never been allowed to govern.

Ms Us Kyi has been held in de facto house arrest since September, with access to her tightly controlled.

But foreign governments have welcomed news that the government has held several meetings with her to try to find common ground. Mr Pithier succeeded Mr Raj-

soomer Lallah of Mauritius, who resigned in November after four years in the job. Lallah was never allowed to visit Burma.

Lallah's last report, in October, accused the military government of torturing, raping and executing civilians, particularly members of ethnic minority groups.

The United States' annual report on global human rights, released last month, grouped Burma with Cuba and North Korea as the world's three worst countries for human rights abuses. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

31 MAR 2001

Myanmar polls without 1913 Suu Kyi? ✓

THE NATION
ASIA NEWS NETWORK 5/5

BANGKOK, March. 18. - From what has leaked out about the discreet talks between the Myanmar military Junta and the Opposition leader, Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, it's now clear that the NLD led by Ms Suu Kyi has been subjected to arm-twisting by the State Peace and Development Council.

First, the military has to "be provided with immunity from prosecution for past abuses" so as to establish an interim government with Suu Kyi's NLD.

Another military condition is that "Suu Kyi give up any personal ambition and not take a direct role in any civilian government".

The last condition, is the most demanding. This is to drop the "NLD's insistence that its landslide victory in the 1990 election be honoured".

The SPDC's hidden agenda is clear. They want to have another election in which their own party will contend with the NLD without Ms Suu Kyi.

THE NATION

19 MAR 2001

19 MAR 2001

Yangon seals Thai border

THE NATION
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

BANGKOK, March 18. - Yangon stepped up its retaliation against Thai government's get-tough policy yesterday when it sealed a second border crossing opposite Kanchanaburi's Sangkla Buki District.

Closure of this temporary crossing point, opposite Three Pagoda Pass, will prevent tourists and goods from Thailand entering Myanmar. Villagers will, however, be allowed to cross into Myanmar territory.

District chief, Mr Chatchawan Siriphant said, the situation was not worth worrying.

He said Thai villagers will be discouraged from crossing to the other side, in order to prevent further problems.

There are three permanent checkpoints, and a dozen crossing points along the 2,400-km long Thai-Myanmar border.

Major-Gen Mana Prachakchit, commander of army's 9th Infantry Division said Myanmar didn't give any reason for the closure. "I was informed only that the order came from their

top command," he said. "We are keeping a watch on the situation, but right now our side of the border remains open."

The second closure came a few days after Rangoon decided to keep its side of the border, opposite Mae Sai, shut despite reopening of the Thai side on Monday.

The move was believed to be a reversal against Prime Minister, Mr Thaksin Shinawatra's campaign against drugs, which highlighted a production centre in Myanmar.

Thai authorities reopened the Mai Sai checkpoint after a month-long closure to pressure Yangon to settle a border between the two armies.

Yangon maintained it had not received any notice from Bangkok about Monday's reopening. Myanmar slapped a ban on Thai consumer goods like gasoline, Monosodium glutamate, and Red Bull energy drink, saying the ban would not hurt them.

Thai ambassador to Rangoon, Mr Oum Mao-lanond said yesterday, Myanmar is facing a shortage of goods, with price of goods rising by 20 per cent.

THE STATESMAN

17 MAR 2001

Burma fails to open border crossing

BY BUSABA SIVASOMBOON

AA 1283
Mae Sai (Thailand), March 12: Burma on Monday failed to open a major border crossing with Thailand even after the Thai side reopened its gates in a bid to end monthlong tensions over fighting between their armies.

Hundreds of disappointed people waited in rain near the Thai checkpoint at the foot of a bridge over a canal that separates Mae Sai town in northern Thailand with Tachilek in Burma.

Thailand opened three other crossings in Mae Sai district, but "the other side does not seem to have responded well to our attempts to ease tensions," Ronarong Sukthavorn, the

chief customs official in Mae Sai, told the Associated Press.

"Burma's procedure is usually slow. But they might open soon, I hope," he said.

Mae Sai is 720 kilometers north of Bangkok.

In Rangoon, a Burmese government spokesman said reopening border crossings will not resolve the "real issues."

"The border crossing have been reopened several times in the past. Scratching the surface is not the solution," said the spokesman, speaking on customary condition of anonymity. Thailand had closed the border after heavy fighting on February 11 between Burmese troops and ethnic Shan rebels seeking independence when several shells landed on Mae Sai

town from Burma, killing two civilians.

Thai troops later fought with Burmese soldiers, accusing them of intruding into Thai soil, a charge Burma denied. Maj. Domsak Khamsijam, who held talks with a Burmese border committee to ease tensions, said he had informed his counterpart about the planned reopening of the border on Monday.

In response, Burma said it had never shut the border in the first place, Mr Domsak said.

"But when we opened the border, they closed their gate. When we asked why, they said they have to consult their supervisors," he said.

Among those waiting was Chinda Nanthapao, a 42-year-old Thai woman who owns a shop in Tachilek. (AP)

THE ASIAN AGE

13 MAR 2001

'Peaceful transition' of leadership in Myanmar rebel group

H/KIO
3/3

Subir Bhaumik

THE SUPREME leader of Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) of north Myanmar, which trained and armed a whole generation of rebels from northeast India, has stepped down, apparently on grounds of poor health, a spokesman of the rebel group said on Wednesday. The spokesman, Jen Lomethong, denied speculation that the KIO chairman, General Malizup Zau Mai has been ousted by fellow rebels in a coup.

Gen. Zau Mai was replaced by his deputy Maj Gen Tu Jai as KIO chairman and chief of staff of the group's armed wing, the Kachin Independence Army, the spokesman said. Zau Mai, 68, suffered a stroke four years ago. This was confirmed by James Lumdau, a member of the 16-member KIO central committee. He said Zau Mai stepped down last week at the group's headquarters at Pajau, in Myanmar's northernmost Kachin State near the Myanmar-China border.

Jen Lomethong rejected rumours that Zau Mai, KIO vice president Zawng Hra and a few other top leaders, had been detained by the coup plotters. "There has been no coup, and nobody has been arrested," said

Jen, who refused to speculate on the origin of the take-over rumour. He said over telephone that Tu Jai had "officially" become chairman on Saturday. But the change, he insisted, was the result of a "collective decision" within the organisation and not the result of a coup.

Jen said that the change in the KIO leadership would not affect the group's truce with Rangoon and that both sides remained committed to the agreement. The KIO spokesman said Zau Mai had stepped down because of "poor health". The 65-year-old general has suffered "two minor strokes" in the past two years and had repeatedly expressed his desire to retire.

"The general is now resting at his home near Pajau", which is the KIO headquarters on the Sino-Burmese border, Jen said. The Kachin spokesman also denied that several battalions of Burmese troops had been deployed to take advantage of the KIO leadership change.

Reliable sources in northern Thailand said there had been discontent among a number of KIO members over Zau Mai's refusal to stand up to the junta's increasing political and military pressure on the armed group and the civilian population. Since the

ceasefire, the Burmese Army has increased its military deployment in Kachin State and taken over some territory formerly controlled by the KIO.

Rangoon has also granted a lot of mining concessions and other contracts to foreign businesses, particularly from China. Zau Mai took over KIO chairmanship after the untimely death of the charismatic and diplomatic Brañg Seng after a second stroke in August 1994. Zau Mai was seen as a tough soldier who had risen steadily through the ranks. Tu Jai has been part of the KIO since its formation in 1961. He was a sergeant in the Burmese Army before joining the guerrilla movement. Tu Jai was actively involved in the KIO ceasefire negotiations with the Burmese junta. The group's 6,000 troops ended a three decade rebellion when Zau Mai signed a ceasefire with Myanmar's military Government in 1994.

But some elements of the group, one of Myanmar's biggest ethnic armies, upset because Myanmar's ruling military junta has refused to open political negotiations with the KIO. "We expected that the ceasefire will be followed by some kind of negotiations that would give us autonomy to facilitate develop-

ment. But that has not happened," said a KIO emissary in India on condition of anonymity.

The KIO cultivated relations with India for a brief spell between 1990 and 1995 before Delhi started improving its relations with the military junta. But though the junta refuses to give political concessions to the Kachins, it allows KIO leaders to do a booming business with China in gold and jade and a border checkpost on the Kachin state's border with China was opened two months ago. "It does not believe in settlements but in buying off our leaders," said the KIO emissary, on condition his location in India is not disclosed.

The Shan Herald Agency for News, a Thailand-based news agency sympathetic to anti-Government rebels in eastern Myanmar, claimed Zau Mai was ousted in a mutiny and that he and other leaders supporting him were under detention in Pajau. But James Lumdau, who is based in Bangkok, said Zau Mai is staying at home in Pajau with his family. The Irrawaddy, a Thailand-based website and magazine on Myanmar issues, reported that many Kachins village elders and KIO officials had been upset by Zau Mai's business dealings with Myanmar generals.

Junta leaders, Suu Kyi in regular contact

S. L. Baruah
Myanmar

10-16

19/2

By Amit Baruah

YANGON, FEB. 18. Myanmar's military authorities are maintaining a regular process of engagement with the National League for Democracy (NLD) general secretary, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi.

According to informed sources, a deputy to the Secretary-I of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and chief of the Director of Defence Services Intelligence, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, has been having weekly sessions with Ms. Suu Kyi.

The first contacts between the Nobel laureate and the military authorities started in October last year and have now blossomed into a couple of sessions every week.

The sources told this correspondent that two issues were currently under discussion — what to do regarding the results of the 1990 elections (in which the NLD emerged the winner) and the drafting of a new Constitution for the country.

They said the dialogue with Ms. Suu Kyi, who remains confined to her University Avenue home, but is allowed to visit relatives from time to time for social occasions, remains at a confidence-building stage.

However, the sources maintained that the dialogue process appeared to be "irreversible", but no one wanted to put any time-frame to the talks, which have been welcomed by the world at large.

It would appear that at this stage, Ms. Suu Kyi has two choices — stick to her position of the principled democrat or eventually arrive at a compromise with the military Government — and don the role of a practical politician.

The sources were also of the opinion that the dialogue between Ms. Suu Kyi and the military authorities was principally home-grown, though the U.N. Secretary-General's special envoy, Mr. Razali Ismail, had facilitated the process by carrying regular messages between the two parties.

For the SPDC, the fact that the country's economy is still not taking off and it receives absolutely no funding from international monetary institutions has become a very serious issue.

Also, the prospective sanctions from the International Labour Organisation (currently in abeyance) seem to have influenced the decision of the Government

to agree to the dialogue with Ms. Suu Kyi.

The sources believe that by this dialogue, the Government has finally recognised the popular NLD leader as an interlocutor — a major concession in itself.

The military authorities are aware that an influential section of the international community, which has been following a policy of non-engagement, is holding back further action on account of the current dialogue.

However, the sources are quick to point out that despite all the problems, the military is firmly entrenched in the country, especially following agreements with a clutch of insurgent outfits that have plagued the country since its independence.

Clearly, the process of dialogue itself will allow both parties to make assessments of each other. The sources believe that there are no discussions on power-sharing as yet and it is difficult to visualise the military packing the bags and returning to the barracks. They have no reason to do so.

The country, overall, remains quiet — there are no challenges to the authority of the military. There is an atmosphere of a quiescence, a situation that suits the Government just fine.

The sources stress that there are actually three parties involved — the military, the NLD and the insurgent groups. Finally, any constitutional arrangement must meet the demands of the numerous ethnic groups that want a place in the Sun in Myanmar.

Opinion is divided here on whether the dialogue is part of a pressure-receiving tactic by the military or the process is for real. Finally, it would all depend on the content of the dialogue, which is taking place away from the public eye.

Many believe that the decision of the two sides to keep their lips sealed on the talks is a positive sign. There has so far been nothing for the press apart from the confirmation from both sides that they have engaged.

Given the fact that the decade of the 1990's was barren and the country moved no closer to reconciliation, the talks in themselves can only be welcomed.

For the sake of this country, its well-wishers can only hope and pray that the talks lead to a solution that is acceptable to all the parties.

THE HINDU

19 FEB 2001

HD-17
25/2

Hastening slowly

IS THERE a way out for Myanmar? Will the dialogue between Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi and the military Government lead to a settlement? Is the military willing to share power? Is the country opening up to the rest of the world?

Questions and more questions. There are few direct answers in Myanmar, a country of 45 million people, which has been the subject of much agitation and concern to the rest of the world during the last 13 years. All have, however, welcomed the dialogue between the National League for

The military in Myanmar is not about to hand over power. But, says AMIT BARUAH, there is an apparent willingness to open up.

Democracy general secretary and the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The dialogue itself is in an early and tentative stage, but does bode well for the future. While welcoming the talks, the Italian Foreign Minister, Mr. Lamberto Dini, said recently in Singapore: "It is much too early to express satisfaction on developments in Myanmar."

But what of the country itself? Everything in the country since General Ne Win's coup of March 1962 has taken place under the orders of the Army. There is no civilian component to the administration; everything is controlled by the Tatmadaw as the security forces are known. Looking at the larger issues, it is clear that, even if Myanmar returns to democracy, governance of the country will hinge on the military for several years to come. Unlike say a country like Pakistan, where too the military holds power and has dominated politics, there is no civilian bureaucracy to run the show in Myanmar.

In Myanmar, uniformed persons run the civil bureaucracy from the district level right up to the top. There is no civilian face to Government; nor is there a perceived need. Analysts also point to another significant feature of the politics of Myanmar and that is the agreement arrived at between the military Government and the ethnic groups such as the



Aung San Suu Kyi... symbol of people power.

Shan, the Wa and the Karens. From 1991-92, the military Government entered into negotiations and reached agreement with all 17 of the insurgent outfits.

"There is a three-way equation in Myanmar — the military Government, the civilian Opposition and the ethnic groups. Any settlement in this country will necessarily involve all three entities," one analyst said.

Many of these insurgent groups are now engaged in profitable cross-border trade — clearly enjoying political and commercial concessions. They are unlikely to settle for anything less in any future arrangement which involves the civilian Opposition. For its part, the military Government attempted three years ago to build up a Golkar-type party modelled on the ruling instrument created by General Suharto, but gave up the idea after the upheaval in Indonesia. Observers believe that in any future set-up the military will continue to have a dominant or major say. They see a situation of "impasse all around".

Also, analysts are of the view

that no matter how much international pressure is applied, the dialogue with the civilian opposition cannot take place in an "accelerated manner". They are also convinced that the military is not about to hand over power.

During a recent visit to Myanmar, it was apparent that the Government was engaged in a re-think on opening up to the rest of the world. While Yangon and the West would like to engage on their own terms with each other, it is evident that the two must arrive at some kind of compromise. There is an apparent willingness in the military regime to open up. It is evident that Myanmar seeks a new engagement with the West as it talks to Ms. Suu Kyi.

The regime is also aware that it cannot explain its case to the rest of the world. For instance, one official told this correspondent that no one was willing to believe Myanmar's side of the story in the recent border clash with Thailand. In the case of the border clash, many believe that Myanmar has a legitimate case, but the Thais have been able to paint

Yangon as the "bad boy."

For Myanmar's case to carry greater credibility, it will have to allow greater access to reporters. That has begun to happen as with the Indian "media delegation" that accompanied the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to Myanmar.

There are lessons for the international community too. The policy of sanctions and isolation has obviously hurt Myanmar, but it would be foolish to believe that such pressures forced the military authorities to talk to Ms. Suu Kyi. A multi-pronged process of engagement with Myanmar is in the interests of those who value democracy in the country. While watching developments, it is important that the world at large can make informed assessments of the direction in which Myanmar is headed.

It is also imperative that the dialogue with the civilian opposition continues. The stakes are high for both parties. Any snapping of the dialogue process could mean renewed pressure on the military Government.

THE HINDU

25 FEB 2001 245 FEB 2001

Myanmar dismisses coup rumours

57-5
712
REUTERS

YANGON, Feb. 6. — The Myanmar government today dismissed rumours that dissatisfied members of the military had been planning a coup, saying the reports were designed to generate negative news coverage of the country.

"This coup rumour is created by certain sectors with vested interests with the ill intention of putting a negative spin so that news reporting on Myanmar can continue to be negative as before," government spokesman Lt Col Hla Min said in a statement.

The Nation, a Thai daily, said at the weekend there were rumours of a coup in Myanmar, as well as speculation that some elements of the military

had been in contact with veteran politician, Mr Bohmu Aung. Mr Aung had written to the military government in December urging immediate dialogue with the pro-democracy Opposition.

The newspaper quoted unspecified sources as saying the government had ordered all military units in the country to report every three hours, and had prohibited officers from having any contact with Mr Bohmu Aung.

Mr Hla Min said, "The report on Bohmu Aung is not true."

He is one of the four surviving members of the legendary "thirty comrades", formed under the leadership of independence hero, Aung San and trained by the Japanese to fight against the British.

Aung San's daughter, Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD chief, has been held in de facto house arrest for more than four months, with access to her strictly controlled.

But there have been signs of a thaw in the government's treatment of the National League for Democracy recently. It was revealed in January that Ms Suu Kyi and senior members of the ruling State Peace and Development Council had held secret talks.

The government last month denied rumours it was divided over the talks.

Myanmar curfew: Myanmar has imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the Sittwe town after religious clashes between Buddhists and Muslims, a government spokesman said today.

THE STATESMAN

- 7 FEB 2001

Suu Kyi's talks with junta promising, says E.U. team

By Amit Baruah

S.P. Baruah
HO-16

SINGAPORE, FEB. 1. A five-member European Union delegation, which met the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, in Yangon recently, has said that her contacts with the military regime were "promising but yet not irreversible".

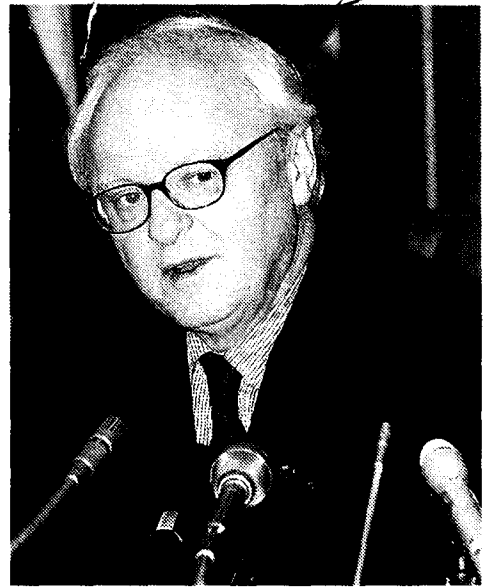
"We had the impression that the contacts were the most interesting thing to happen since (elections in) 1990," Mr. Borje Ljunggren, representing the E.U. presidency, was quoted as telling reporters in Bangkok. According to him, Ms. Suu Kyi was "cautiously optimistic" about her talks with the Myanmar junta's intelligence chief, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt.

Mr. Ljunggren, who is the head of the Swedish Foreign Ministry's Asia department, said the Nobel laureate was

212

"in a very good mood and well in all respects". Stating that the visit of the E.U. delegation, which had been worked out some time ago at an ASEAN-EU Ministerial meeting in Laos, came at "an interesting but delicate moment," he added that both sides wanted to maintain strict confidentiality about the talks. According to him, the contacts between the military regime and Ms. Suu Kyi were still at an early stage.

"Both sides seem to want to pursue them (the contacts)...but you need something more substantial to consider them irreversible," the Swedish official stated. "We expressed the hope that the contacts would develop further, broadening and deepening so as to promote national reconciliation, democracy and human rights," Mr. Ljunggren said.



Mr. Borje Ljunggren, European Union head of the Asia Department, addressing newsmen in Bangkok on Wednesday after he returned from a four-day E.U. mission to Myanmar. — AP

THE HINDU

2 FEB 2001

History behind the property

Protesters are worried about the lawsuit over Gen. Aung San's house. If his son wins, his half of the property will go to the Myanmar junta. Aung San Suu Kyi may be evicted or sent to prison. GRACE BRADBERRY reports

AUNG San Suu Kyi is a woman of whom people do not like to ask personal questions. For one thing, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize has been all but canonised, and one does not quiz saints about their private lives. For another it would seem that she has no private life.

Before 1988, when she returned to Yangon to nurse her dying mother and became leader of the National League for Democracy, the Opposition party, she was a housewife in Oxford with a husband and two sons. After 1988, she was an international human rights heroine, who was allowed little contact with her family. It was as if from that time on her private life came to a halt and was replaced by a public one. But nobody is without a private life.

Last November, Mrs Suu Kyi's resurfaced. A brother, whose name barely appears in the index of books written about her, filed a lawsuit demanding half of the property in Yangon where she has lived, often under house arrest, for the past 12 years. Property is divided equally between children under Myanmar law.

Reports said Mrs Suu Kyi and her brother were estranged. Why would anyone, let alone a brother, do such a thing to a revered woman who is so revered? The move was inexplicable because her brother is a US citizen and under Myanmar law, a foreigner cannot own property in the country.

The answers to these questions lie with 54 University Avenue, the shuttered house by Lake Inya that has become something of a shrine for human rights campaigners. The house that seems to be owned by history and by politics was given by the state to Mrs Suu Kyi's mother in recognition of her late husband, General Aung San, who won independence from the British. Yet the truth is that for both Mrs Suu Kyi and her brother, Aung San

Oo, it is a house where the personal is embedded in every cranny. It was here that brother and sister grew up together, in the shadow of their father's reputation and became locked in a complex sibling rivalry that has continued for 50 years. The rift is deep, kept open by perceived slights and wounding disagreements of a personal nature.

Compared to Mrs Suu Kyi's moral fight, it seems petty and yet it could have led to her losing the house and with it a crucial powerbase for the Myanmar Opposition.

The furniture at the house is the same that both siblings remember from their childhood. The house is unchanged, though neglect has taken its toll a layer of moss has crept across peeling plasterwork.

In most other cities it would be a property developer's dream, located in the town's best neighbourhood and in need of work. Even on Yangon's less than buoyant property market, the estate has been variously valued by commentators at between £4 million and £40 million.

Eight thousand miles away stands a house that could not be more different. Built in 1962, it covers a mere 1,200 sqft, has three bedrooms, two bathrooms and is located on an unassuming street in San Diego. Its value is about £200,000. It is here that Mrs Suu Kyi's brother, a 57-year-old computer engineer for the US Navy, lives with his wife Lei Lei Nwe Thein, a university administrator. They moved there in 1990. A year later, Mrs Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize. Only last November, his neighbours discovered the connection.

They were alerted to it by leaflets posted through doors that

denounced Aung San Oo, and condemned the lawsuit he had filed claiming half the Yangon property. Members of the Myanmar-American community held up placards outside Aung San Oo's house.

What had incensed the protesters were the possible consequences of the lawsuit. If Aung San Oo won, his half of the property would probably be handed over to Myanmar's military government. Some feared that Mrs Suu Kyi would be evicted, perhaps even moved to prison. On the Internet, Myanmar-American Americans speculated on the brother's motivations: he was anti-democracy, in league with Myanmar's junta, he had been pushed into it by his wife, he hated his sister. There were ugly e-mails about "genetic mutation" implying Aung San Oo had betrayed his father's legacy.

Aung San Oo was the eldest of three children born to Gen. Aung San and Khin Kyi, a former nurse who had looked after him when he became sick. In July 1947, just six months before independence, General Aung San was assassinated.

His eldest son was four, his youngest son three and his daughter two. Mrs Suu Kyi grew up unable to remember her father. Aung San Oo was old enough to miss him. He is recalled as a withdrawn child and there is speculation that he was traumatised by his father's death. It might have helped to have his mother on hand. But she accepted a government job and became, immersed in it.

In her book *Freedom From Fear*, Mrs Suu Kyi recalls that she was closer to her other brother, Aung San Lin, than to Aung San Oo. Tragically, Aung San Lin died when he was eight. He drowned in an ornamental lake on the grounds of the house. Of the two children, Aung San Oo was the least psychologically robust. "He was always jealous of his sister," recalls a family friend. "There was a definite rivalry. He hadn't his sister's charm, though he was able in other ways."

Dr Alice Khin, a Myanmar expatriate who now lives in Canada, says Aung San Oo "is said to have felt lonely and depressed". He was also judged to be less good looking than his sister. "She also had confidence. He did not." Both children, though brought up as Buddhists, attended Catholic schools in Myanmar. But while Mrs Suu Kyi was educated in Myanmar and then, from 15, in India, Aung San Oo was despatched to Dover

College in England for the sixth form. Living with her mother in Delhi, Mrs Suu Kyi took flower arranging classes, learned to ride, and acquired a wide circle of Indian friends, including Indira Gandhi's sons Rajiv and Sanjay. Returning from Dover College, Aung San Oo would have found himself an outsider to this circle. Mary Trevelyan, an old family friend, was appointed his guardian while he was at Imperial. But despite this support, it seems that he felt isolated during his student days.

His wife has complained that the Myanmar community in London abandoned him. While Mrs Suu Kyi met her husband, Michael Aris, at Oxford, Aung San Oo felt few ties to Imperial, and later moved to America.

But it was an event years later that would lead to the greatest rancour between brother and sister.

Before their mother's death, Aung San Oo married Lei Lei Nwe Thein, his junior by about 10 years.

His mother disapproved of his choice. Mrs Suu Kyi asked her brother not to take his wife to the funeral. He went alone.

Lei Lei Nwe Thein seems to provoke bile. Rumours abound in the Internet chat rooms frequented by Myanmar-Americans. One is that before she emigrated to America, she dated men from the American Embassy in Yangon.

Mrs Suu Kyi's sister-in-law is also accused of being manipulative and there are unsubstantiated rumours that her family is connected to the military regime. Lei Lei Nwe Thein denies all this. "On the Internet people are swearing about me, saying that I am the one making this claim," she told a Myanmar-language radio station. So was it true that her father enjoyed "some sort of close relationship" with Gen. Khin Nyint, part of Myanmar's military regime? "My father?" Lei Lei Nwe Thein replied. "He is dead, so how can he have some relationship with Gen. Khin Nyint? My father was never a government servant. He never behaved humbly to anyone to get opportunities. He never stole government money. How could he have a relationship with Gen. Khin Nyint?"

She also rejects the idea that she encouraged her husband to pursue the lawsuit. "My husband is not a weak man. He is like stone and nobody can change his desire." So why did he bring the lawsuit? "It is just to legalise his

knew the role that her daughter would play in Myanmar politics.

"We have never thought about living in the house," Lei Lei Nwe Thein told the Radio Free Burma journalist. "Khin Kyi wanted it to be opened up as a memorial. You all know, this is a state house. The state gave it to the family."

She also cited a Myanmar statute of limitation which gave her husband only 12 years from his mother's death in which to file the suit. "If not, Oo will lose his property. This is just to make sure that we own half of the house. The

only thing she (Mrs Suu Kyi) has to do is accept this. Her refusal causes all kinds of trouble." The trouble has landed at the San Diego door of Aung San Oo and his wife. Last week a Myanmar court threw out the lawsuit, ostensibly on technical grounds.

Observers see this as a softening of the junta's stance towards Mrs Suu Kyi and her party. Those who have heard from Mrs Suu Kyi over the past few months say that she has not been concerned about the property dispute.

Aung San Oo last visited Myanmar in July, to attend the 53rd anniversary of his father's death. He went to the house at University Avenue. The two siblings did not speak.

— *The Times, London.*



Aung San Suu Kyi in front of a portrait of her father, General Aung San. — AP/PTI

SCRABBLE® BRAND

SCRABBLE® is a registered trademark owned in the U.S.A. by Hasbro, Inc., in Canada by Hasbro International, Inc. and elsewhere by J.W. Spear & Sons PLC.

E ₁	G ₂	A ₁	L ₁	M ₃	S ₁	A ₁	
							RACK 1
C ₄	N ₁	N ₁	V ₄	T ₁	O ₁	E ₁	Triple Word Score
							RACK 2
H ₄	R ₁	S ₁	R ₁	H ₄	T ₁	E ₁	
							RACK 3
A ₁	I ₁	S ₁	P ₃	L ₁	M ₃	N ₁	Double Word Score
							RACK 4

PAR SCORE 110-120
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (Merriam-Webster) and OSW Official Scrabble Words (Chambers). **JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW** 10-24-00 © 2000, United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

SCRABBLE® BRAND

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION BY JUDD © 2000, United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

S ₁	T ₁	Y ₄	P ₃	T ₁	I ₁	C ₄	RACK 1 =	70
M ₃	E ₁	R ₁	M ₃	A ₁	I ₁	D ₂	RACK 2 =	64
A ₁	L ₁	P ₃	I ₁	N ₁	E ₁		RACK 3 =	8
H ₄	O ₁	S ₁	T ₁	A ₁	G ₂	E ₁	RACK 4 =	83

PAR SCORE 140-150
JUDD'S TOTAL 225
10-23-00

SCRABBLE® is a registered trademark owned in the U.S.A. by Hasbro, Inc., in Canada by Hasbro International, Inc. and elsewhere by J.W. Spear & Sons PLC.

Myanmar junta frees top Opposition leader

Yangon, January 25

THE MYANMAR'S Junta has released a senior opposition figure and 19 young democracy activists in an apparent goodwill gesture ahead of a European delegation's arrival here next week, sources said today.

National League for Democracy (NLD) vice-chairman U. Tin Oo was taken late yesterday from the military base outside Yangon where he had been held for four months and returned to his home in the capital, an NLD source said.

"This is welcome news and we feel that this may be a gesture of goodwill ahead of the European Union delegation's visit later this month," he said, referring to the January 29-31 mission. "We hope

that more will follow."

The opposition source said the political atmosphere in Myanmar had improved significantly since the UN announced earlier this month that a senior general had held face-to-face talks with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

"We are feeling much less pressure from the authorities now," he said. The talks appear to be paving the way for a landmark dialogue between the two sides that would end a damaging decade-long impasse.

Aung San Suu Kyi's party chairman Aung Shwe remained under house arrest after they and Tin Oo attempted to travel to the northern city of Mandalay in September, in defiance of orders to stay in the capital. (AFP)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JAN 2001

EU delegation pays Suu Kyi a visit

Rangoon, Jan. 30: A European Union delegation, in Burma for three days, paid a visit on Tuesday to pro-democracy Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent more than four months under de facto house arrest.

Access to the Nobel Laureate has been strictly controlled by the Burma authority. The only foreign diplomat allowed to meet Ms Suu Kyi since September was UN special envoy Razali Ismail. A reporter on the scene on Tuesday saw cars from the EU delegation drive to Ms Suu Kyi's house. No details of the talks were immediately avail-

able. The delegation of EU representatives, who arrived in Rangoon on Sunday, is in Burma to put pressure on the military government to move towards democracy.

The team met Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, secretary one of the ruling State Peace and Development Council, and foreign minister Win Aung on Monday. Meetings with representatives of Burma's ethnic minority groups are also planned.

Burma has faced heavy criticism from the EU for its treatment of Ms Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy, which won elections in 1990 by a landslide but has

never been allowed to govern.

Recent weeks have seen signs of a thaw in the Burma military's stance. Earlier this month, the United Nations revealed Ms Suu Kyi and senior government leaders had held secret meetings. Last week, more than 80 NLD prisoners, including party vice-chairman Tin Oo, were released from prison. Cartoons and editorials denouncing the NLD in the official media have also suddenly ceased. Burma agreed to the visit last month, during a meeting in Laos of ministers from the EU and the Association of South East Asian Nations. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

31 JAN 2001

HD-16
21/1

A mellowing in Myanmar



Aung San Suu Kyi's portrait is held up behind bars by a protestor in front of Myanmar's embassy in Bangkok. (Below) The U.N.'s special envoy, Mr. Razali Ismail... trying for a breakthrough.

ARE THE quiet contacts between the Myanmar military junta and the National League for Democracy (NLD) chief, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, the first signs of a thaw? Or are these contacts just a mechanism to release some of the mounting pressure on the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) as the junta is known? Whatever the results of the current talks, brokered by the U.N. Secretary-General's special envoy, the Malaysian diplomat, Mr. Razali Ismail, they are certainly a welcome development in the troubled history of Myanmar.

When the news broke of the dialogue, it took some confirmation. An NLD executive member, U. Lwin, confirmed in Yangon that talks were going on between Ms. Suu Kyi and the junta, which has been hounding her for quite some time. "We are very glad... the meeting is what we have been working for. Since (news of) it has appeared, the responsibility has become greater on both sides not to interrupt the momentum of the process," U. Lwin was quoted as saying. "Both sides have to be careful not to irritate the process," he said, adding that the NLD Central executive was first told of the dialogue in December 2000.

It appears that several rounds of talks have been held since October



between Ms. Suu Kyi and Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, the powerful intelligence chief in the junta. While no details are available, it is evident

Are the quiet contacts between the military junta and Ms. Suu Kyi the first signs of a thaw? AMIT BARUAH reports on the developments in Myanmar.

that a lot of pressure has been brought to bear on the SPDC to at least consider the prospect of dialogue with the NLD and Ms. Suu Kyi, who won the general elections held back in 1990.

According to available reports, the junta has "directed" its official media to halt all attacks on Ms. Suu Kyi and a court case relating to possession of the NLD chief's personal house has been put off. After years of heaping abuse on each other, both sides sense there is an opportunity available for them. For instance, the All Burma Democratic Students Front (ABSDF) has hailed the dialogue, terming it a "truly historic breakthrough after 12 years of struggle".

However, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt has been quoted as saying in the State-run media that Western-style democracy will not be restored in the country — a statement which indicates that a long, hard bargain lies ahead in Myanmar. "It can be witnessed that some big neo-capitalist countries are interfering and applying pressure on Myanmar on all fronts to force the adoption of a democratic system identical to theirs. In fact, it is impossible to introduce the same democratic system... a certain period of time is needed to implement the national policy and create a disciplined and durable democratic system which will be

most compatible with the desire of all nationalities," he added.

According to Mr. Bertil Lintner, a Chiang Mai-based Myanmar watcher, all kinds of pressure led to the present talks. The sanctions imposed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the pressure from the U.N. and the involvement of Malaysia and ASEAN had prepared the ground for talks.

As far as ASEAN is concerned, its work has been behind the scenes, there has never been any public expression of concern relating to Myanmar. However, many analysts are convinced that the sustained pressure brought by ASEAN may have led to the present dialogue between the junta and Ms. Suu Kyi.

While the dialogue process is all set to continue, with Mr. Razali Ismail playing an active role in the process, there are also suggestions that the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, may himself get involved at a later stage. But it is still very early days in the dialogue and fingers need to be firmly crossed in the weeks and months ahead. Diplomats in Yangon believe that the junta has finally accepted Ms. Suu Kyi as an interlocutor. In the past, the military had refused to deal with her.

According to these diplomats, the process of contact has only just begun and it could take a long while before any tangible results can be seen. But they do believe that this is the most significant development during the last 10 years of Myanmar politics.

Myanmar has also decided to allow a European Union delegation to visit Yangon — a further sign that it does not want to take on a harsh, confrontationist attitude towards Western Governments.

For its part, the junta is hoping that during the period of contact, the sanctions regime will be relaxed and Myanmar will become more acceptable to the rest of the world. For the process to be self-sustaining and credible, there must be trust between the NLD leadership and the junta as they work out just how Myanmar is to be governed.

Clearly, a final solution only lies in compromise. Outright victories do not appear possible. Both parties must indulge in give and take to shape to a free, democratic and forward-looking Myanmar. The all crucial question is — will the military be ready for an honourable return to the barracks or will a power-sharing arrangement be necessary for some time to come? There is, at present, no definitive answer to that question.

Democracy will take time: Myanmar junta ^{HC-13}

Yangon, January 18

MYANMAR'S MILITARY has dampened hopes of a breakthrough in moving the country towards democracy, with a senior leader today quoted as saying that democracy will take time to build and will never follow the Western model.

News this month that senior members of the ruling military held secret talks with pro-democracy Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi raised hopes that the country's political stalemate could be finally broken.

But the official Kyemon newspaper quoted Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, secretary one of the ruling state peace and develop-

ment council, as saying that Myanmar would resist international pressure to adopt western-style democracy.

"It can be witnessed that some big neo-colonialist countries are interfering and applying pressure on Myanmar on all fronts to force adoption of a democratic system identical to theirs," Khin said.

"In fact, it is impossible to introduce the same democratic system to all countries as they differ in historical backgrounds, geographical conditions, traditions and culture, and evolution of their political, economic and social conditions," he said. "A certain period of time is needed to implement the policy and create a durable democratic system," he said. (Reuters)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 JAN 2007

ENGAGING A DEMOCRACY 'ICON'

THE UNITED NATIONS has done well to broker a political engagement between Myanmar's ruling military junta and its arch adversary and a phenomenal proponent of democracy, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. However, it is a measure of diplomatic circumspection that the global organisation appears to have waited for this new reality to seem sustainable before announcing the evident breakthrough. Ms. Suu Kyi and the governing SPDC (the State Peace and Development Council) have held at least one meaningful meeting in recent months to begin addressing the intractable puzzle of how best Myanmar can be administered. The aim of "confidence building" was at the core of the in camera discussions that the two sides have held so far under the current initiative of the U.N. The more tangible objective, discernible in the latest official comments at the U.N. headquarters, is to facilitate a round of preliminary talks between the SPDC and Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) so that the two can try and agree to begin direct parleys on the substantive questions of how Myanmar should reorganise its constitutional order. It is obviously too early to judge how promising the U.N.'s facilitation is for a final political settlement of the impasse between the SPDC and the NLD.

In one sense, the U.N.'s current agenda in regard to Myanmar's internal affairs is particularly delicate, given that there has been no intervention in that country by any external force within the conventional definitions of the world body's diplomatic business. However, the SPDC had consented to the appointment of a veteran Malaysian diplomat, Mr. Razali Ismail, as the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan's Special Envoy to Myanmar last April. The Yangon regime's action then was explainable on two counts — Myanmar's reasonably cordial equation with the U.N., which had been cognisant of that country's domestic situation all along, and possibly the SPDC's calculation that the democracy question

could perhaps be 'internalised'. Myanmar's military Government had by that time traversed a long way in gaining leverage in regional institutions such as the Association of South East Asian Nations. Yet, it was arguable that a U.N.-facilitated 'internalisation' of the challenge from Ms. Suu Kyi's externally-applauded movement would be a bonus for the SPDC. For the U.N., it was simply a matter of affirming international interest in Myanmar's political question in the wake of a controversy over the so-called "dollars for democracy" plan.

The message in Myanmar's contemporary history is that its military leadership, long used to being the 'government', will not be willing to transfer power to the people without a grim struggle. A parallel reality is that Ms. Suu Kyi has somehow been unable in recent years to recapture her earlier mystique of a messianic leader so as to unseat the military dictatorship through a revolution of 'people power'. This has not of course diminished her status as a democracy 'icon', although the SPDC seems to have skilfully resorted to the politics of manipulation within a societal framework of poverty and ethnic diversity in order to stay in power. The SPDC's top leaders such as Gen. Than Shwe and Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt are also aware of the political power of the gun barrel besides the potency of propaganda. The skewed but perceived meaning of Ms. Suu Kyi's marriage to a foreign national has remained an emotive topic in the political counter-attack against her by the SPDC and its earlier incarnation in power, the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC). In addition, the SPDC's hold on power is traceable to a tangential political discourse on the need for measured steps towards 'full' democracy over time. Linked to the SPDC's version of a slow march towards democracy is its constant refrain about the need to sustain Myanmar's territorial integrity in the face of divisive tendencies along ethnic lines.

THE HINDU

17 JAN 2001

Myanmar not tickled by Suu Kyi cartoons

DEUTCHE PRESSE AGENTUR

YANGON, Jan. 13. — Myanmar's information ministry has ordered state-run media to stop printing cartoons and commentaries lambasting Opposition leaders such as Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi, a government source said today.

Today's editions of the *New Light of Myanmar*, the government's main mouthpiece, had dropped their wonted commentaries attacking the National League For Democracy, suggesting the ban may have gone into effect.

The order follows an alleged "breakthrough" in Myanmar's long-standing political deadlock between the ruling junta and Mrs Suu Kyi's National League For Democracy, which won the

1990 general election but has been denied power for the past decade.

The United Nations special envoy for Myanmar, Mr Razali Ismail, has announced that a political dialogue had been initiated between the regime and Mrs Suu Kyi and talks were on.

Thus far, there has been no official reaction to Mr Razali's announcement in Myanmar's tightly-controlled and mostly state-owned media, expect for the toning down of attacks on the Opposition today.

Foreign diplomats based in Yangon have been advising the regime to stop their "stupid cartoons" against Mrs Suu Kyi in the local media, many of which have ridiculed her private affairs such as her marriage to the late Michael Aris, a British professor who died two years ago.

Border build-up

Tension mounted on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border today after a troop build-up by both countries in the wake of a clash over the construction of a dam on the Naaf, DPA adds from Dhaka.

Bangladesh Rifles said military contingents had been put on high alert as Myanmar continued to amass troops along the border.

About 25,000 troops from Myanmar's Nasaka Border Force and regular army units with heavy artillery guns were deployed along the border, government officials in the Bangladeshi border town of Teknaf said.

Earlier, Bangladesh and Myanmar governments began deploying heavy weapons after Dhaka opposed the construction of the dam.

THE STATESMAN

14 JAN 2001