

MYANMAR / COUP PLOT AGAINST JUNTA 110-14
29/9

Death for Ne Win's kin

YANGON (MYANMAR), SEPT. 26. A special court on Thursday sentenced the son-in-law and three grandsons of the former dictator, Ne Win, to death after convicting them of treason for plotting to overthrow Myanmar's military Government.

The court also found Aye Zaw Win and his sons — Aye Ne Win (25), Kyaw Ne Win (23) and Zwe Ne Win (21) — guilty of trying to recruit army officers for the coup and inciting military personnel to commit high treason, for which they were sentenced to life in prison. But this sentence was expected to be subsumed by the death penalty.

"The court finds (the defendants) guilty of high treason for which the court awards the sentence of death by hanging under Section 122 of the Penal Code," the judge, Aung Ngwe, said after reading out the 80-page judgment.

The verdict will have to be endorsed by Myanmar's High Court, which is considered a formality.

The four men were composed and listened to the verdict in silence. They have denied the charges, saying they have no interest in politics.

They have until next Thursday to appeal against the verdict in the Supreme Court, but there was no indication if they would exercise that right.

The court was packed with journalists of foreign news orga-

nisations, diplomats, relatives and girlfriends of Aye Zaw Win's sons. The relatives wept as the men were led out of the court.

The four were arrested on March 7 after an army officer told authorities that he had been approached by the family to mount the coup to reinstall Mr. Ne Win in power.

Their unexpected arrest exploded the widely held belief that the Ne Win clan had influence over the junta. The death sentence made it clear that any influence he may have had has disappeared.

Mr. Ne Win (91), and his daughter Sandar Win — Mr. Aye Zaw Win's wife — have been placed under house arrest at their sprawling lake-side mansion.

The Government has said that Mr. Ne Win's relatives planned the coup because they were upset at losing some of their economic and political privileges with the gradual sidelining of Mr. Ne Win from power circles. Mr. Ne Win, who came to power in a 1962 coup, stepped down in 1988 in the face of pro-democracy demonstrations that were crushed by the military. The Generals, who took over power, continue to rule today.

During the 31/2-month trial, the prosecution built a strong circumstantial case against the four men, portraying them as a family hungry for power, whose

members resorted to black magic and treachery but who were exposed by loyal army officers.

Earlier on Thursday, another special tribunal found Mr. Aye Zaw Win (54), and four others including one of his sons, guilty of illegally importing unregistered vehicles and satellite phones, and sentenced them to jail terms ranging from seven to 56 years.

The two tribunals were held at Yangon's Insein prison where the defendants are detained.

On Sept. 12, a military tribunal sentenced more than 80 soldiers to 15 years in prison for their role in the alleged coup plot.

The soldiers were from a regiment responsible for guarding Mr. Ne Win's 28-acre lake-side mansion.

Prosecutors have suggested that the Ne Win family used voodoo during the coup plot. As part of the evidence, they displayed three miniature dolls of the junta's top three leaders: Generals Than Shwe, Maung Aye and Khin Nyunt, apparently used in black magic rituals.

Of its 46 witnesses, the prosecution relied mostly on Col. Than Htay, a senior army commander who testified that he had tipped off military intelligence officials that the four wanted his help with the coup plot. — AP

27 SEP 2002

THE HINDU

E.U. team in Yangon for talks

YANGON: The first European Union mission to Myanmar since the May release of the Opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi (in the picture), arrived in Yangon on Sunday, saying it



wanted to maintain a dialogue with the ruling military junta. The four-member team was also expected to meet Ms Suu Kyi and members of her National League for Democracy during the three-day visit, aimed at promoting political reconciliation in Myanmar.

"We are seeing Government representatives and representatives of the Burmese society," a member of the E.U. team said. The delegation aims

"to maintain the dialogue with the Myanmar Government," he said. The E.U. has been one of the strongest critics of the junta and maintains tight restrictions on members of the regime travelling in Europe. However, it supports reconciliation talks the regime began with Ms Suu Kyi in October 2000. The talks led in May this year to Ms Suu Kyi's release after 19 months of house arrest.

— AP

Suu Kyi is willing to compromise with junta



Suu Kyi

Bangkok: Myanmar's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi says she is willing to compromise with the country's military rulers to achieve national reconciliation, a newspaper reported on Friday.

"Dialogue always entails compromise," Ms Suu Kyi was quoted as saying in an interview published on Friday by 'Haaretz', one of Israel's most respected newspapers. A copy of the report was received in Bangkok.

"I don't think you can go into dialogue saying 'I can't compromise,'" Ms Suu Kyi said. "You had better not start that way, because the dialogue won't get anywhere."

Ms Suu Kyi has led a nonviolent campaign for democracy in Myanmar since 1988 and has suffered long periods of house arrest by

the military junta. She was released from the latest round on May 6.

Her freedom was partly due to efforts by UN special envoy Razali Ismail, who has also brokered the start of reconciliation talks between her and the generals in charge of Myanmar, also known as Burma.

The talks have so far been described as confidence-building steps. No substantive dialogue has taken place between the two sides. She did not say what she was willing to compromise over.

"I am not going to talk about it. It's premature ... How can I talk about it?" she said during the interview, conducted on August 6 by a 'Haaretz' correspondent in Yangon. Observers have said that a possible agreement could involve some kind of power-sharing between the NLD and the military. Ms Suu Kyi said she harboured no ill-will against the military.

17 AUG 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Malaysia likely hub against terror

The Star / Asia News Network

Anti-terror pact

PUTRAJAYA (Malaysia), July 30. - The USA has singled out Malaysia as a possible regional centre for activities against terrorism, the foreign minister, Syed Hamid Albar, said.

"They are very impressed with the development of our country and our lead in combating terrorism in Asia, and have asked about the possibility of making Malaysia the centre for activities to counter terrorism," he said after a meeting with the US Secretary of State, Gen Colin Powell, at Wisma Putra here today. He said that although the proposal was still at an early stage, the two countries had agreed to "work out something substantive" where Malaysia could serve as a forum for ideas and discussions on terrorism.

Gen Powell was in Malaysia on a stopover visit to Brunei to attend the Asean Regional Forum and Asean Ministerial Conference.

Prior to his meeting with Syed Hamid, he had called on the prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and the deputy prime minister, Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Syed Hamid said Gen Powell in his meet-

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, July 30. - Foreign ministers from Japan, China and South Korea agreed today to strengthen cooperation on transnational issues of importance, including international terrorism and piracy, Japanese officials said.

In the first ever talks between the three nations' foreign ministers, the Chinese foreign minister, Mr Tang Jiaxuan, proposed that the three countries hold a ministerial-level meeting of members of the Asean to discuss problems, including piracy and international terrorism. - Yomiuri Shimbun / ANN

ings with Dr Mahathir and Mr Abdullah also raised issues such as extradition of suspected terrorists, human rights, the trial of Anwar Ibrahim and the conflict in West Asia. He said the USA had agreed to go through the "normal channel" whenever they needed to interview anyone to gather evidence.

On the Internal Security Act, Syed Hamid said the government had never used it to

frustrate its political opponents but only to protect peace and stability in the country.

"The USA has got its position, and we have got certain position that we hold. We believe in human rights, we believe in the rule of law, and we believe in the independence of the judiciary. "There may be differences at the end of it when those things are implemented on the ground but, overall, we have no problem in explaining our own point of view," he said.

Syed Hamid said that this also applied to the trial of Anwar. "They understand we have differences on this but the most important thing to consider is whether we have followed the rule of law and whether the case was fairly dealt with. On West Asia, Syed Hamid said the USA had the biggest role to play to bring about a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the region. Gen Powell said that in his meetings with Dr Mahathir and Mr Abdullah he also explained President George W Bush's plan for West Asia as contained in a speech by the President on 24 June.

In Bandar Seri Begawan, Syed Hamid said Gen Powell raised the Anwar issue as part of his duty to inform Malaysia of the US position.

THE STAR ONLINE

31 JUL 2002

Myanmar's future in people's hands, says Suu Kyi

MOULMEIN (MYANMAR), JULY 21. As once-forbidden political songs played, the Myanmar Opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, told supporters on Sunday that only the people had the right to decide the fate of the military-run nation.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate, on her second trip outside the capital since being released from house arrest in May, received a rousing welcome in this eastern Myanmar city. Military authorities, who once harassed her and jailed members of her National League for Democracy, did not appear to interfere with Ms. Suu Kyi's activities. "Whatever happens, the NLD will persevere in the building of a democratic system," she said. "Only the people have the right to decide the fate of a country. No one else should or must take the decision into their hands."

Ms. Suu Kyi spoke to some 500 supporters as she placed NLD signboards on a building in

Moulmein that will become the party's local headquarters. The mood was festive, and NLD songs espousing democracy were played over loudspeakers. A party member said it was the first time the songs had been allowed to be played.

Some 3,000 clapping residents jammed Moulmein's main street when Ms. Suu Kyi arrived from the capital Yangon on Saturday after a 290-km road journey. Such large public gatherings are rare in Myanmar, also known as Burma, other than at rallies organised by the military, which has ruled for the past 40 years.

Ms. Suu Kyi's four-day trip shows the ruling junta's new willingness to allow her and her party some political freedom. "Our goal of democracy is within sight," said Kyi Lwin at the opening of the NLD office. Already in his 70s, the NLD official was released from a four-year prison term in 2001. After the ceremony, Ms. Suu Kyi left for three towns south of Moulmein. — AP



The Myanmar Opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, pays her respects at her father, Aung San's tomb in Yangon on Friday. Aung San guided Myanmar toward independence from Britain in 1947. — AP

Free at last, as per the script

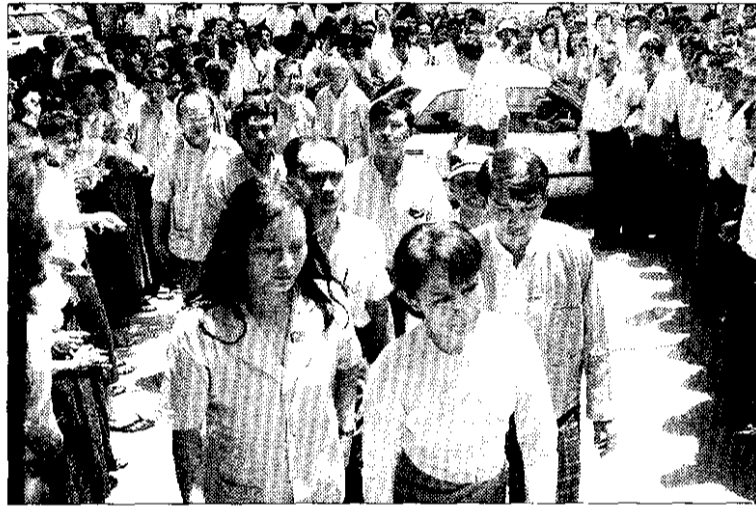
96-9 24/5
Myanmar has come to a standstill. In fact, a few multinationals which were operating in Myanmar like Pepsi, have withdrawn from the country. The country's economy is subject to sanctions by the US, multilateral financial organisations and the International Labour Organisation.

General Than Shwe realised the need to do something to restore Myanmar's international credibility and acceptability. Despite some reticence and opposition from his seniormost military colleagues, the Army Chief of Staff General Maung Aye and Intelligence Chief General Khin Nyunt, he ordered the arrest of Ne Win and his family members early this March on the charge of planning a military coup of overthrow the government. This was a difficult decision which had to be underpinned by his gaining acceptability by the people of Myanmar and the rank and file of soldiers with their family links with Myanmerese civil society.

The anxiety that the military had about Suu Kyi weakening their authority by external influence generated by her husband of British origin also disappeared because he passed away a couple of years ago. The key to remain in authority, therefore, was to open up lines with Suu Kyi which would pacify domestic public opinion and create some international credibility because of the lady's international stature as a

Noble Laureate and charismatic advocate of democracy in the international community.

Despite receiving an enthusiastic mass welcome, Suu Kyi has not made any major pronouncements on her political plans or intentions since her release. She has only said that there are more positive



prospects of a dialogue with the military regime to restore democracy in Myanmar. She has not defined any time-frame for fulfilling this objective.

The current indications based on pronouncements by the Than Shwe's government and the scanty details available on the negotiations which preceded Suu Kyi's release are that she has agreed not to make

any immediate demands for elections or for the military giving up its power. She has apparently agreed to continue political dialogue with the regime to arrive at political compromises which would gradually lead to restoration of democracy in her country over a period perhaps of five years. There are

even rumours that even after five years, the proposals would be for setting up of a government with more civilian representation, with the military still having a dominant role.

It is pertinent to touch upon Myanmar's importance to India in this changed scenario. Myanmar's strategic location at the Tri-Junction of India-Bangladesh and Sino-

Bangladesh and Sino-Indian frontiers makes it an important geo-strategic area for the security of north-eastern parts of India. A co-operative relationship with Myanmar is important to overcome secessionist movements in the north-eastern regions of India. Given the competitive, if not confrontationist relationship between India and China, it is necessary for India to retain politico-strategic contacts with Myanmar in the context of China's close and extensive political and defence relationship with the military regime in Myanmar. Myanmar is also a potential source for energy resources and a market for Indian goods, technology and joint ventures.

It is this reasoning which resulted in India developing an effective working relationship with the Than Shwe Government since 1992. While undertaking this exercise, the Indian government quietly stressed the need for restoration of democracy in that country with the military regime. But India did not join the bandwagon of public condemnation or tutorials on democracy undertaken by some western countries. India's approach is very similar to that of important countries of South East Asia.

More recently, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh paid a very fruitful visit to Yangon as negotiations for the release of Suu Kyi were reaching their final stage.

Myanmar pawn in China military move

Jaideep Mazumdar
Kolkata, May 22

CHINA HAS been not only concentrating in establishing a naval presence in India's vicinity, it has also upgraded Myanmar's air bases. Over the past few months, it has also given an aggressive push to develop road and rail links from its heartland to the Myanmar coast along the Bay of Bengal.

According to military intelligence reports, China has further upgraded Myanmar's air bases at Meiktila south of Mandalay

and at Lashio in the north-eastern part of that country. The first phase of upgradation was completed about six years ago. What bodes ill for India is that it has, in recent months, stationed J-6 and J-7 fighter bombers and A-5M ground attack craft at these bases. Refuelling facilities for these aircraft are being built at the Great Coco Islands, where an airstrip has already been built. The J-6 and J-7 aircraft are meant for use against guided missile ships.

Work on developing road and rail systems to connect Yunnan

(central China) to Myanmar's coast on the Bay of Bengal has also been speeded up recently. "All this means that Myanmar has been made a major surge point for China and the only target can be India," the officer said.

Beijing has placed its entire Myanmar operations under the command of its Chengdu Military Region (CMR). The CMR also looks after Chinese military operations in Tibet. As Hindustan Times has already reported, China has been building road and rail links up to the Indian

border along Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet. "Seen in its entire perspective, these can only be construed as posing an overt military threat to India," contended the top Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) officer.

But most alarming are the arsenal of missiles China has moved in to not only the Myanmar mainland, but also the Coco Islands and at two other ELINT bases leased to it by Myanmar—the Hainngyi Islands in the Irrawaddy delta and St. Matthew's Island off Victoria Point close to the Northern en-

trance to the Strait of Malacca. Intelligence reports suggest that the CSS-N-3 (or JL-1) (intermediate range, submarine launched solid propellant single warhead ballistic missile) and the CSS-N-4, a short range version, has been inducted into the Bay of Bengal. The Dong Feng 1 missile with a payload of 500 kilos and range of 100 kilometres and the M-11 short range, mobile, solid propellant ballistic missile (500 kilo warhead and 300 kilometres range) are also being inducted there.

Intelligence reports also sug-

gest that China is planning to conduct a limited air and naval exercise just off the Myanmar coast involving the Hainan-class fast attack craft, the SSM-equipped Jianghu class frigates and the Luh-class destroyers as well as some submarines. All these reports and the latest developments, feel strategic experts, should serve as a wake-up call to India and should send a clear message to New Delhi: that it should concentrate on the eastern sector as well.

(Concluded)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAY 2005

Myanmar closes its border with Thailand

REUTERS
BANGKOK, MAY 22

MYANMAR closed three major border checkpoints on Wednesday in the latest salvo in an escalating row following Thai artillery shelling across the frontier earlier this week, Thai military officer said.

A senior Thai Army officer said Myanmar had shut the northern border crossing between Mae Sai and Tachilek, the western checkpoint between Mae Sot and Myawadi, and the crossing between Ranong and Victoria Point on the Andaman Sea coast.

Major General Saprang Kalayanamitr, deputy commander of the Thai northern region, said he was told by Myanmar that the bor-

der crossings were closed for security reasons.

Earlier on Wednesday, Thailand said it would withdraw thousands of troops from northern provinces bordering Myanmar in an effort to ease tension after a series of clashes between rival ethnic militias along the frontier.

Thai Defence Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh said he had ordered the Thai Army to call off military exercises in four border provinces after Myanmar complained that Thai troops were involved in attacks on its border posts. Yangon sent a protest letter to Bangkok on Monday saying the Thai Army provided artillery support for an attack by the Shan State Army ethnic militia on Myanmar border stations.

INDIAN EXPRESS

23 MAY 2002

Myanmar's only acceptable face

The release of Aung San Suu Kyi from the protracted house arrest she has suffered could be momentous. She has carried the banner of democracy in Myanmar for more than a decade, ever since she emerged as the overwhelming victor in that country's elections. Her democratic victory was overturned by a military regime that has changed its guise more than once but continues to rule in Myanmar without any popular basis.

Suu Kyi herself has been subjected to frequent restraints. She has endured great personal loss and suffering. Through it all she has remained steadfast and resolute. These are the qualities that brought her worldwide recognition, including the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Her political foe, the military junta that controls Myanmar, is unapologetic and uncaring. It has been disdainful of human rights issues and has been difficult to deflect even when world opinion bears down hard upon it. But still, in this latest phase external pressure seems to have had some effect. Suu Kyi's release has been negotiated under UN auspices and the Secretary-General's representative has played a key part. It will

be of interest to India that the person who achieved this result is Razali Ismail of Malaysia, formerly his country's very successful High Commissioner in New Delhi where he retains a wide circle of friends.

Suu Kyi has been restrained in her statements since her release. There is no premature sense of triumph; on the contrary, she has shown acute awareness that this is only a step in the protracted struggle for democracy. Myanmar has been governed arbitrarily for endless years. In the process, the once prosperous country, exporter of rice and much more to India and other lands, has decayed into deep poverty.

The long ruling dictator Ne Win, who is still surviving though now old, infirm and without authority, passed on his mantle to a junta that attracted almost universal opprobrium. For long, the regime was kept at arm's length by nearly the whole of the rest of the world. But over the last few years a deliberate policy of engagement with it has been undertaken by the Association of South-east Asian Nations. The purpose was to bring Myanmar out of isolation and nudge it towards more open and liberal pol-

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR

ities in both economic and political matters. It helped that the Asean as a group is not too doctrinaire on the question of democracy, its own members having far from uniform practice in this regard. The Asean's approach may have been a factor in the present outcome: it is well known that Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir has been the chief advocate of engagement, and it was his country's representative who took the lead in the UN-brokered discussions.

The release now leads on to the next stage, about which there is both expectation and uncertainty. On previous occasions, too, there have been moments of faint hope, when it seemed that a beginning had been made in bringing Myanmar's long travail to an end, but it all led nowhere.

Suu Kyi and her colleagues in the National League for Democracy will be well aware of the course that events can take. The first task undertaken by the leader, now that she is free to travel, is to visit different parts of the country in order to consolidate

her support and energise her supporters. Beyond that lies a crucial series of talks between the NLD and the regime. This is not an easy prospect for either side. Essentially, it is a matter of coming to terms on a power sharing arrangement.

Suu Kyi is the democratically elected leader. All attempts to marginalise her have not succeeded. But no authoritarian regime — and especially one as Myanmar's rulers — is meekly going to hand over power to a rival. Armies, once they leave the barracks, are notoriously difficult to send back. So, it is a tough and delicate engagement that lies ahead.

One cannot say how much scope for compromise there is and where the balance may lie in any new political arrangement. One can only hope that Myanmar will finally obtain an acceptable face before the world, which on present reckoning can only be that of Suu Kyi.

Regrettably, India has not been seen to any advantage in these recent events. While government heads and foreign ministers the world over have expressed their welcome for Suu Kyi's release, we could do no better than come out with a

carefully worded statement which was more laudatory of the regime than of the person it had arbitrarily detained. Nor was our representative in Yangon among the many who went to offer felicitations to the newly released leader.

It was not always so. India spoke up against the military crackdown when it occurred and maintained its principled support for democracy long after most of the rest of the world showed readiness to come to terms with the regime. We did not remain wholly aloof from Myanmar, for we are next door neighbours and must have a certain amount of contact and cooperation. Moreover, with China not far over the horizon, there is a more complex background against which our relations with Myanmar must be seen. But this does not mean that we should seem to be soft-pedalling our belief in democracy or our recognition of Suu Kyi as the emblem of democracy in her country.

Our policy of looking for a balance between the two sides is not arbitrary as to its purport when it comes to Myanmar.

(The author is a former foreign secretary.)

Suu Kyi sticks to demand for tourist boycott

James Pringle The Times, London

YANGON, May 10. — Mrs Suu Kyi's demands for a tourist boycott in Myanmar have not changed since she was arrested in 1989. She said today that she would continue to demand that tourists be asked to boycott Myanmar until the government releases her and other political prisoners.

It is certainly a dilemma and I think people help themselves by sticking to the situation. I don't think they are deciding for themselves what they can do to help. The pro-democracy leader told *The Times* in one of her first interviews since her release on Monday after 12 months of house arrest.

She indicated that despite her release she was not ready to abandon her campaign for tourists to boycott this lush, paradise-dotted country, which desperately needs foreign currency after 40 years of military misrule.

Mrs Suu Kyi, 57, said she intended visiting Britain soon. Her husband, Michael Aung Mye Thazan, died in Britain after being refused analysis by the Yangon government to visit his wife, which he was gravely ill. She refused to discuss that painful event, saying "I never discuss personal family matters."

Sitting on a rickety chair on the scenic floor of the

house, Mrs Suu Kyi said she was not ready to abandon her demand for a tourist boycott. She said she would continue to demand that tourists be asked to boycott Myanmar until the government releases her and other political prisoners.

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Editorial: Changes in Myanmar par...

THE STATESMAN

11 MAY 2001

Changes in Myanmar

5.1 The Junta forced to compromise

It was more than a decade ago that Suu Kyi, the courageous leader of her people, was denied her rightful place at the top of Myanmar's leadership by a shameless coup by the frightened military. She suffered nineteen months of house arrest, was refused permission to visit her dying husband, or more correctly refused permission to return from London after his death, and suffered denial of access to her supporters hoping this would finish her leadership. Generals and colonels are not familiar with leaders of character whose followers keep the faith. The international community has come through with credit; their steadfast support of democracy in Myanmar and refusal to do business with any but the elected representative of the people finally brought home to the colonels the need to talk to Suu Kyi and seek a deal. 36 Western companies withdrew from an already reclusive Myanmar and sanctions were beginning to bite. Above all it was the sense of isolation imposed by the world community and Suu Kyi's refusal to compromise on principles that persuaded the junta leader, General Than Swe, that something had to give and if Suu Kyi would not, he and his military friends would have to blink first.

There were other reasons. The economy was in poor shape despite the *carte blanche* given to entrepreneurs willing to bring money and expertise into the country, provided only that they gave a cut to the military leadership. But times are changing: Indian businessmen singing the praises of the military dictatorship, rather as they lauded Indira Gandhi for getting the trains to run on time, should do some introspection. The good old days are over, never to return. It has taken the junta over 40 years to come to the conclusion that, as Gen Than Swe acknowledged, there was need for reconciliation — *conflict and confrontation will only worsen matters rather than bring about solutions*. The self-seeking colonels must have been horrified at what they brought about in another direction; a deep incursion into Myanmar and its affairs by China, which has established a vice-grip on the economy; yesterday's friend is now coming across as a threat.

Both Suu Kyi and the junta are at pains to stress that there has been no secret deal; we have no confidence in the junta but we respect the elected leader of the Myanmar people. If she says so, it must be so. In any event in the coming days and weeks, any secret deals or any misapprehensions on the part of the junta will be exposed. It remains to pay tribute to Suu Kyi who kept the faith with her people despite inducements, threats and worse. We salute her indomitable spirit as well as her pragmatism. She seems singularly free of any feelings of rancour against her oppressors; the best they can do is to fade into the distance and leave Myanmar to the leader they so cruelly denied for two decades.

THE STATESMAN

11 MAY 2002

Junta to resume talks with Suu Kyi

YANGON, May 9. — Myanmar's military government said today that talks with opposition leader Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi would continue but that details about them would not be divulged by either side.

Mrs Suu Kyi was released Monday from 19 months of house arrest, raising hopes that the military junta that has controlled Myanmar since 1988 will loosen its hold on power. Secret talks between the two sides aimed at national reconciliation were launched by a UN special envoy in October 2000.

"The reconciliation process between the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and military leaders will continue according to the mutual agreements on both sides," deputy intelligence chief Maj Gen Kyaw Win said today. "Both sides have

agreed not to divulge details of the talks."

Mrs Suu Kyi said after her release that the initial "confidence-building" phase of the talks begun in October 2000 had been completed and they would now begin tackling policy issues.

However, Gen Win sidestepped questions aimed at confirming whether the initial phase was wrapped up.

"If we didn't have confidence in each other from the beginning, the dialogue would not have started in the first place," he told reporters.

Mrs Suu Kyi hinted Monday that she expected negotiations with the military to take place behind closed doors, telling a news conference hours after her release that she had "never subscribed to the tell-all school of thought." — Agencies

THE STATESMAN

10 MAY 2002

Why Suu Kyi was dumped for junta

9/5
SB
Aungmye
HG-10
Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi, May 8

NO INDIAN diplomat was among the foreign envoys who met Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday. New Delhi has an excuse — it's in-between ambassadors. But there are reasons the world's largest democracy treads warily when it comes to Myanmar's generals.

It wasn't always so. India was the sole Asian country to denounce the 1988 repression of the pro-democracy activists and the only neighbouring country to offer them refuge. All India Radio became a kind of Radio Free Burma. Indian diplomats were accused of funding dissidents.

But the moral halo India gained was soon obscured by strategic setbacks.

One, Myanmar let rebels and smugglers play havoc in the Northeast. Overstretched by Kashmir, India's military warned its hands were tied. Says G Parthasarathy, ex-ambassador to Myanmar, "Lobbying by Northeastern chief ministers was to prove the most important reason India changed its policy."

Two, Myanmar tilted sharply towards China. Post-1988 Beijing became the trainer and arms supplier to the Myanmar army. A rarity be-

fore, bilateral military visits became annual events. Beijing drew up plans for an "Irrawaddy corridor" giving it direct access to the Indian Ocean. Yangon allowed China new radar facilities at Cocos Island in the Bay of Bengal. Says John Garver, expert on Sino-Indian relations, India faced a "nightmare scenario" of being "flanked east and west by two China-allied states."

Three, Southeast Asia's disapproval of India's policy left P V Narasimha Rao regime's Look East policy dead in the water.

In early 1993 New Delhi reversed tracks. Foreign Secretary J N Dixit went to Yangon with the mission of, as he put it, "normalising relations." AIR broadcasts stopped. Bilateral exchanges resumed. There were hiccups. Joint military operations against Northeastern rebels fell through once when Suu Kyi got the Nehru Prize. In 1999 Pakistan tried to get rights to set up an airbase at Haka in Chin state.

Engaging the military has not meant dumping Suu Kyi. Parthasarathy says the generals know she is "still immensely popular among the Indian public." And, as Myanmar sources admit, the junta still takes note of the pro-democracy noises in India.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 MAY 2007

THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2002

MYANMAR'S DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE

THE CONSIDERED MOVE by Myanmar's military junta in releasing the country's celebrated protagonist of democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi, at this juncture has not really made any epochal impact on the consciousness of the international community. Two factors account for the relative absence of a sense of momentous news at this time. First, Ms. Suu Kyi herself has lost some of her political lustre as the sole authentic leader of Myanmar in the past year or so. In the event, the prime significance of her release from her latest spell of house arrest is that she can now hope to project herself as the democratic alternative to the existing military dictatorship that styles itself as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). To discern a subtle aspect of this kind is not to underestimate Ms. Suu Kyi's potential ability to bounce back as the true representative of the Myanmarese people. However, while there is no doubt whatsoever about her historic contribution to the ethos of an internationally resonant struggle for democracy in that South East Asian state, the charismatic leader of the Myanmarese National League for Democracy (NLD) has more recently suffered a certain degree of eclipse as a votary of freedom. This has something to do with the comparative success of the SPDC leaders at the vile art of propaganda against her political credentials. At a different but related level, Ms. Suu Kyi seemed to have decided at some point during the past several months to modulate, if not also moderate, her democracy campaign itself. Closely linked to these realities is the second factor that appears to have determined the political complexion of the present situation in Myanmar. Now that the ongoing U.S.-led campaign against the globalised politics of terrorism has come to overshadow the so-called Western crusade for democracy around the world, the NLD leader in Myanmar cannot obviously ignore such consequential diplomatic inferences as the SPDC might wish to

draw.

10-10 9/5
The timing of the SPDC's latest decision to set Ms. Suu Kyi at liberty is, in a sense, related to America's current agenda of choosing tactical and strategic friends for its anti-terror campaign without much concern for the political proclivities of the ruling dispensations across the international stage. Whether or not Myanmar's SPDC can indeed hope to become a U.S. partner in this regard, the fact remains that Senior General Than Shwe and his associates in Yangon have chosen a particularly sensitive moment in world politics to try and play a card that might earn them a few brownie points in the reckoning of the West. Yet, if the European Union in particular claims to be still very sceptical of the SPDC's current game plan, the reason flows from the very uncertainties of the unfolding scene in Myanmar.

Now, Ms. Suu Kyi herself has hinted, soon after her release, that she might want to opt for a reasonably calibrated countdown towards democratic resurgence in her country. Current news and diplomatic reports from Yangon portray her in a mood of some conciliation towards the Yangon regime. It is of course too early to determine whether she will think deeply before planning any mass mobilisation campaign for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. Her calculations will pertain to the external responses that the SPDC's latest initiative might evoke. While the Yangon establishment has at present acted in the context of the U.N.'s diplomatic intervention that was aimed at stabilising the politics of Myanmar, the question before both the NLD leader and the SPDC is whether they can reach a settlement by treating the democracy question as their country's internal matter. Global and regional powers, including India, can encourage a direct dialogue between the SPDC and the NLD, given Ms. Suu Kyi's past record of preferring non-violence even in the face of provocation. Her current stance on non-violence seems to be no different.

THE HINDU

9 MAY 2002

1988
Myanmar

Freedom and Hope

The unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest by the Myanmar military authorities will hopefully pave the way for resumption of the political process in that country and lead to transfer of power in due course to an elected civilian administration. There is no doubt that the release was brought about by sustained international pressure and threat of sanctions by the US and the European Union. Credit should be given to the UN special envoy Razali Ismail who worked hard behind the scenes over the past 18 months. The generals in Yangon had also reasons to be worried about the loyalty of the army after the recent discovery of a plot to stage a coup by some military officers. Hopes of Myanmar making rapid economic growth by joining the ASEAN have largely been belied. There were threats of withdrawal of large US companies exploring and developing oil and gas resources. A section of opinion both within Myanmar and outside used to hold that Ms Suu Kyi was too rigid in her stand and should show some flexibility in her negotiations with the military junta. Now she has been released unconditionally and the military junta has appealed for political activity to be conducted within a framework of national unity. While 40 years of military rule in Myanmar has consolidated Yangon's writ over the entire territory and effectively neutralised various insurgencies — no mean achievement — the country does not have much to show in terms of political and economic development. A military dictatorship in the region is an anomaly after the Indonesian military whom the Yangon generals tried to imitate have lost out.

Ms Suu Kyi has conducted her campaign for democracy in a totally non-violent manner, modelling herself on Gandhi's civil disobedience struggle. In a region where women leaders abound, Ms Suu Kyi stands head and shoulders above most of them in her values, commitments and principles. A scholar, mother and housewife, she found herself in politics due to circumstances and not because of a sense of manifest destiny of her family. While she has proved herself as a leader of national struggle, her skills as a political negotiator and her temperament as a stateswoman are yet to be tested out. India has been in a delicate predicament in respect of Ms Suu Kyi. India's sympathies for her cause and admiration for her struggle were expressed through the award of Nehru prize for international understanding and pronouncements at the highest level. At the same time, a shared common border of difficult terrain and common security problems have compelled the two governments to maintain a pragmatic working relationship between the two armed forces and the two administrations. The governmental interaction intensified over the last year with the visit of senior Myanmar generals to India and Indian foreign minister's visit to Yangon. All these developments did not leave the Yangon authorities in any doubt that India was in favour of Ms Suu Kyi being freed and a political dialogue initiated to take Myanmar on the road to democracy. The Indian good wishes are with Ms Suu Kyi as she begins her efforts to negotiate with the military authorities steps to usher in democracy in her country.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 MAY 20

LADY FREED

It is tempting to regard the release of Ms Aung Sang Suu Kyi as a major breakthrough for democracy in Myanmar. There is, of course, genuine celebration at the headquarters of her party, the National League for Democracy. Ms Suu Kyi has described her unconditional release as a "new dawn" for her country. But she has also sounded a warning note, showing her level-headedness and tenacity as a political leader. Her individual freedom is significant only in as much as it paves the way for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. Moreover, this goal is insufficient in itself, if it is not endorsed by the immense task of salvaging the nation from every kind of ruin. Besides, there are still more than a thousand political prisoners held by the military regime in unspeakable conditions. In the international arena, Ms Suu Kyi has become a symbol of hope or the "power of the powerless", as the Nobel committee put it when awarding her its peace prize in 1991. Yet to many spectators, her release could smack of strategic tokenism on the part of Myanmar's military junta. Such a gesture is far from any change of heart in the regime, as its guarded statement accompanying the release indicates. The experiments in socialist economics conducted by Myanmar's dictators since the early Sixties, together with severe international sanctions, have ravaged the country's economy. Ms Suu Kyi's international standing could be the key to survival if her powerful well-wishers — the United States of America, the European Union and Japan, among others — could be placated. It is significant that Myanmar's generals have taken to calling themselves, since 1997, the "state peace and development council", rather than the earlier "state law and order restoration council".

Such doubts could qualify more optimistic readings of this event as the culmination of talks between Ms Suu Kyi and the generals, overseen by the United Nations envoy, Mr Razali Ismail. The possibility of concessions could also worry some. Would Ms Suu Kyi compromise her stance on getting her party's sweeping victory in the 1990 general elections politically acknowledged by the junta? A long and grim history of military dictatorship and human rights abuse opens up behind this crucial moment in the unfolding of Myanmar's destiny. Forced labour, narco-terrorism, ethnic unrest and the collapse of public health and education are some of the seemingly impossible obstacles to the restoration of a functioning democracy in Myanmar. India will have its own internal reasons for finding a balance between working with the generals, particularly at the borders, and supporting what Ms Suu Kyi has come to stand for in humane and political terms. The values at stake here amount to nothing short of basic human freedom.

THE TELEGRAPH

8 MAY 1997

Suu Kyi meets envoys on curbs

FROM ANDREW MARSHALL

Yangon, May 7 (Reuters): Freed Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi met foreign diplomats and party activists today as she began the long struggle to rebuild the country's battered democracy movement and push for political change.

Myanmar's military government unconditionally released Suu Kyi yesterday after 19 months of house arrest, and the Nobel peace laureate must now try to resolve divisions in the democracy movement and press the ruling generals for real change.

Party sources said Suu Kyi met European Union diplomats at her house in Yangon this morning, and it was likely they discussed the continued international economic embargo which she has vowed to support as long as the military remains in power.

"They probably discussed the sanctions," said an official from Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy on condition of anonymity.

Suu Kyi's release was widely seen by diplomats as an attempt by the generals to get sanctions lifted rather than the start of genuine momentum for political change.

The military has ruled Myanmar for four decades and says the multi-ethnic country could disintegrate if it moves towards democracy too quickly, but the desperate state of the economy may have forced their hands.

Suu Kyi has said she remains opposed to foreign investment, aid and tourism while the military held power, but was looking forward to political progress.

"Both sides agree that the phase of confidence building is



WALK ON: Aung San Suu Kyi (right) prays at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon. (AFP)

over," Suu Kyi said shortly after her release yesterday.

"We look forward to moving across to a more significant phase," Suu Kyi arrived at the party's headquarters in mid-afternoon today, greeted by scores of supporters clapping and chanting "Good health to Aung San Suu Kyi".

She declined to make any comments to journalists after meeting party officials.

Her NLD party won elections in 1990 by a landslide, but the military refused to hand over power.

Suu Kyi was held under

house arrest from 1989 to 1995 and was detained again in September 2000 after a series of frustrated attempts to leave Yangon to visit party members.

Mirroring international reaction when she was set free in 1995, the world hailed Suu Kyi's release yesterday but leaders cautioned it was only the first step towards restoring democracy. US President George W. Bush said her release was a possible "new dawn" for Myanmar, but the US government expected other major changes before lifting investment, aid and other sanctions.

THE TELEGRAPH

8 MAY 2002

Free Suu Kyi cries democracy

Yangon, May 6 (Reuters): Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was freed today from 19 months of house arrest in Myanmar and told rapturous supporters she would carry on the fight for democracy in the military ruled country.

Calm and composed, her hair tied back with flowers, Suu Kyi was driven from her lakeside home to the ramshackle Yangon headquarters of her National League for Democracy (NLD) to cheers from a huge crowd gathered in the most overt display of political activism in years.

She told a news conference although her party remained opposed to foreign investment, aid and tourism while the military held power, the junta had placed

no conditions on her release. Announcing the release of the 56-year-old daughter of Myanmar's independence hero, the military government said it had begun "a new page for the people of Myanmar and the international community".

Suu Kyi said while she was pleased the junta was proclaiming a new dawn, she wanted real political change.

"We only hope the dawn will move forward very quickly into full morning," she said.

Western and Asian governments hailed Suu Kyi's release as a breakthrough.

In a congratulatory letter, British Prime Minister Tony Blair told Suu Kyi: "Your release is a further step towards

Burma's route back to democracy". But it was not clear how much further the junta will go in their bid to shake off international sanctions that have brought the economy to the brink of collapse.

As dusk fell on her first day of freedom, Suu Kyi visited Myanmar's most sacred Buddhist site, the famous Shwedagon Paya, a gold stupa on a hill that dominates the Yangon skyline.

State newspapers, television and radio made no mention of Suu Kyi's release, but many citizens listen to international radio broadcasts and news was spreading by word of mouth.

There was little immediate reaction on the streets with most

ordinary residents too fearful to discuss their feelings.

Razali Ismail, the United Nations special envoy to Myanmar who helped negotiate Suu Kyi's release, said elections could be held within 2-3 years.

The head of European Union foreign policy and security, Javier Solana, said in a statement he hoped the release would "begin the process of Myanmar's reintegration into the international community".

UN human rights chief Mary Robinson called the move "historic", but in a statement with the UN special investigator for Myanmar, Sergio Pinheiro, added she hoped it would be followed by freedom for all political prisoners.



Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar after her release. (AFP)

SO NEAR AND YET SUU FAR



Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi makes her way through a large crowd of supporters to return to her party headquarters in Yangon after being freed from house arrest on Monday.

Junta gives in, sets Suu Kyi free

YANGON: Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was freed from 19 months of house arrest on Monday and she told hundreds of rapturous supporters she would carry on the fight for democracy in the military-ruled country.

Calm and composed, her hair tied back with flowers, Ms Suu Kyi was driven from her lakeside home to the ramshackle Yangon headquarters of her National League for Democracy (NLD) to cheers from a large crowd gathered in the most overt display of political activism in years.

Risking the ire of a government whose troops had brutally put down pro-democracy student protests in 1988, hundreds of people thronged the tree-shaded street outside the NLD headquarters to catch a glimpse of Ms Suu Kyi. Monks in crimson robes and shaven-headed nuns carrying paper umbrellas to shade them from the tropical sun were among the crowd.

Although her party had not changed its opposition to foreign investment, aid and tourism while the military remained in power, the junta had placed no conditions on her release, Ms Suu Kyi told a press conference.

Western and Asian governments hailed Suu Kyi's release as a breakthrough, but cautioned it was only the first step of a long process towards political reform. It was by no means clear how much further the junta will go in its bid to shake off international sanctions that have pushed the tottering economy to the brink of a collapse.

Announcing the release, the military government said it had begun "a new page for the people of Myanmar and the international community".

Ms Suu Kyi said while she was pleased the junta was proclaiming a "new dawn", she wanted real political

change. "We only hope the dawn will move forward very quickly into full morning," she said.

The junta has been holding secret talks with Ms Suu Kyi since October 2000 in a bid to break the political stalemate that has gripped the country for more than a decade and secure the lifting of international sanctions.

Ms Suu Kyi said the talks—which have so far centred on 'confidence-building'—now had to start tackling substantive issues and map out a framework for political change. (Reuters)

"We only hope the dawn will move forward very quickly into full morning"

H10-1
915

Suu Kyi freed

S G Asia
Myanmar

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, MAY 6. The military junta of Myanmar today "unconditionally" released one of the world's best-known political prisoners, Aung San Suu Kyi, general secretary, National League for Democracy (NLD), after 19 months of house arrest.

There had been intense speculation in the last few days about Ms. Suu Kyi's release in Yangon, the second such event in seven years. A Government announcement later said the country was turning a "new page."

Ms. Suu Kyi (56), who came out of her lakeside residence to a rousing reception from supporters, later spoke to the NLD leadership and the press at the party's headquarters. The 1991

Nobel laureate and daughter of the Burmese national hero, Aung San, clarified that her freedom was unconditional and that she was free to go wherever she wanted. "I hope to be able to carry out my duties for my party and my country in the best possible way," Ms. Suu Kyi was quoted as saying. Ms. Suu Kyi, who was placed under house arrest in September 2000 for defying a Government ban on travelling out of Yangon, said talks between her and the military authorities were now at a stage when substantive issues about the country's future could be addressed. "The phase of confidence-building is over and we look forward to moving ahead," she told reporters.

Clearly, there is no "larger agreement" under which Ms.

Suu Kyi has been freed, but there does appear to be a "larger process" of dialogue between the NLD and the military Government under which the release took place. "My release should not be looked at as a major breakthrough for democracy. For all people in Burma to enjoy basic freedom -- that would be the major breakthrough," she said.

On when the country would become democratic, Ms. Suu Kyi said: "I hope not in too many years." Thanking the United Nations Special Envoy, Razali Ismail, for facilitating the talks between her and the military authorities, she said: "I am very grateful for the role that the U.N. has played and for what Mr. Razali has done. I am cautiously optimistic."

RECEIVED

7 MAY 2002

MYANMAR / WORLD LEADERS WELCOME SUU KYI'S RELEASE

H10-121
A new beginning, says junta

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, MAY 6. Myanmar's military junta which "unconditionally" released the leader of the National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi, on Monday said in a written statement that the day (there was no direct reference to Ms. Suu Kyi) would mark a "new page for the people of Myanmar and the international community". "We shall recommit ourselves to allowing all of our citizens to participate freely in the life of our political process, while giving priority to national unity, peace and stability of the country as well as the region".

About Ms. Suu Kyi's travel rights, a spokesman for the armed forces said: "She can travel. We will sort of cooperate because she is a prominent person. The Government is responsible for her security."

Speaking to this correspondent, Mr. Aung Zaw, editor of the Bangkok-based magazine *Irrawaddy* said it was "too early" to draw conclusions from Ms. Suu Kyi's release. Whether or not her release would speed up the pace of political reform remained to be seen, he said by telephone from Bangkok. "She says the release is unconditional, but we will have to wait and see," Mr. Aung Zaw said, adding that one had to be "very cautious" about interpreting to-



'SUUING' A NEW ERA: Members of Aung San Suu Kyi's political party are busy sewing National League for Democracy flags in Yangon on Monday. — AP

day's development.

For her part, Ms. Suu Kyi appeared more than conscious of the need to be realistic about her release. "Most of the changes over the past 18 months have benefited the NLD, but it is not for the NLD but for the people of Burma that we are struggling for freedom," she told reporters. "We have been disappointed at the slow pace of the release of political prisoners. The releases are important, not only in humanitarian terms but political terms as well," she said.

Responding to the release, the U.N. special envoy, Mr. Razali Ismail, said: "I am very appreciative of what the (Myanmar) Government has

done. I am delighted for her and delighted for the country." "This is a very big milestone, and I hope the next step is that the Government and Aung San Suu Kyi sit together to decide how to pursue this goal (of national reconciliation)".

The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, who has a personal rapport with the Myanmar military leadership, was among those who welcomed the release. "Both sides (the military and Ms. Suu Kyi) should be commended. I don't think anything can be achieved overnight," he said, pointing to the tortuous course of negotiations that lie ahead. The military, clearly, is not about to hand over power to the NLD on

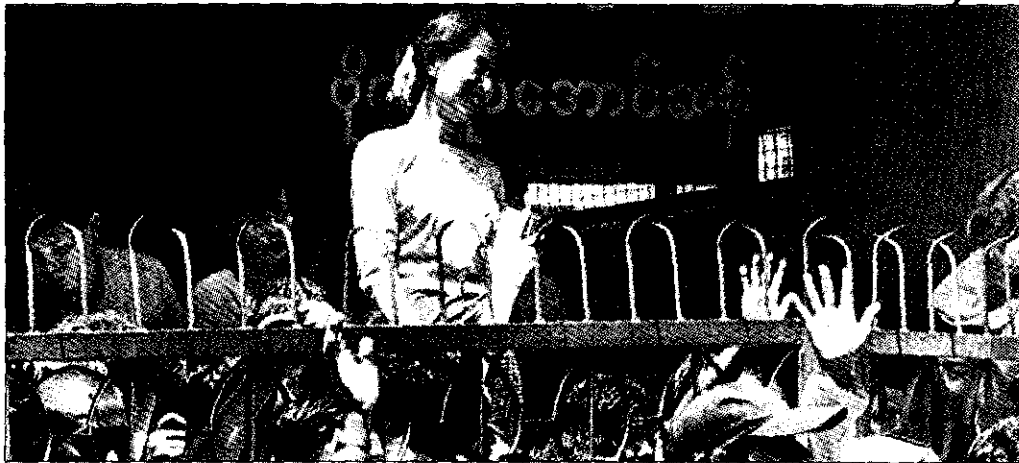
a platter. The next few weeks and months could be crucial for Myanmar and Ms. Suu Kyi.

AP reports:

Britain welcomed her release as "an important moment for the Burmese people." "Her freedom is long overdue," the Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, said in a statement. "We hope that she will now be allowed to carry out her responsibilities as general secretary of the National League for Democracy freely and openly. I hope it will signal the start of substantive negotiations with the state Peace and Development Council and a brighter future for all the people of Burma," he added.

The Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, said: "I think there are signs of progress in Burma (Myanmar), of increasing moderation and compromise." In Singapore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "Singapore welcomes Aung San Suu Kyi's release from house arrest as a positive step forward in the national reconciliation process." The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Hassan Wirayuda, said: "I am happy, and hopefully this step can encourage the process of reconciliation between the various groups there." The Philippine President, Gloria Arroyo, said the release was part of the continuing engagement of Myanmar in democratic politics.

THE HINDU



REUTERS

Aung San Suu Kyi with supporters in Yangon after being freed on Monday.

Freed, she talks of freedom fight

Yangon, May 6

NOBEL PEACE laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was freed today after 19 months of house arrest. She told a cheering crowd of supporters that she would carry on her fight to bring democracy to the military-ruled country.

Calm and composed, her hair tied back with flowers, Suu Kyi arrived at the ramshackle Yangon headquarters of her National League for Democracy to roars of "Long live Aung San Suu Kyi" from a crowd that had massed to greet her in the most overt display of political activism in years.

The 56-year-old Suu Kyi told a news conference that though her party had not changed its stance on opposing foreign in-

vestment, aid and tourism while the military Government remained in place, the junta had placed no restrictions on her. Analysts say the dismal state of the economy is the main factor pushing the junta toward political change, but the Government insisted the move was sincere.

Razali Ismail, the UN special envoy to Myanmar who had been negotiating Suu Kyi's release, said elections could be held within two to three years.

In a statement, the military said it had begun "a new page for the people of Myanmar and the international community." But Suu Kyi said while she was pleased, she wanted to see real political change.

Reuters

HER STORY

- **August 26, 1988:** Addresses rally in Yangon
- **Sept 18, 1988:** Military wrests power. Hundreds of pro-democracy supporters killed
- **Sept 24, 1988:** National League for Democracy is formed. Suu Kyi is general secretary
- **July 20, 1989:** Suu Kyi put under house arrest
- **1991:** Awarded Nobel Prize for Peace
- **July 1995:** Released
- **Sept 22, 2000:** Put under house arrest again

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 MAY 2002

Myanmar

awaits Suu Kyi release

Yangon, May 5 (Reuters): Nobel Peace laureate and pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi could be released from 19 months of house arrest as early as Monday, according to sources in military-ruled Myanmar.

Political sources said the 56-year-old Suu Kyi was likely to be released on Monday morning and would make a statement at the headquarters of her National League for Democracy (NLD) at around midday.

But the military has made no comment on the expected release. On Yangon's University Avenue, where Suu Kyi has been confined to her home since September 2000, barricades and a "No Entry" sign remained in place today.

Meanwhile, the ramshackle NLD headquarters in central Yangon, usually closed on the weekends, was open today as activists dusted, cleaned and installed an air conditioning unit. They said they were getting an office ready for Suu Kyi and expected her to visit the headquarters on Monday.

Myanmar has been gripped by feverish speculation for days that Suu Kyi was set to be freed. But as day after day has gone by with no word on her release, growing doubts have emerged.

Diplomats in Yangon had speculated the government would go ahead with Suu Kyi's release, which has attracted much media attention, over the weekend to avoid overshadowing an official visit by Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong, who arrived this afternoon.

Suu Kyi has spent years in house arrest since emerging as the figurehead of Myanmar's democracy movement in 1988 after the military bloodily suppressed anti-government protests.

She was confined to her house from 1989 to 1995, and her release then was marked by jubilant scenes as crowds thronged the street outside her residence.

THE TELEGRAPH

6 MAY 2002

A. L. 2007

Suu Kyi release on the cards?

*HD-14
1/5*

*SB 88
myanmar*

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, APRIL 30. There are reports that a "major announcement" expected from the ruling Myanmar junta could include the release of the detained pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. The U.N. special envoy, Razali Ismail, today confirmed in Kuala Lumpur that a major development was expected in Myanmar politics.

"That (Ms. Suu Kyi's release) is on the menu. Be patient. I think that something big will happen," Mr. Razali, who was in Yangon last week, told reporters.

A Reuters report from Yangon today quoted a "source close to the ruling junta" as saying: "It will be more than the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and some other political prisoners.

It will be a breakthrough in Myanmar politics." At the weekend, the Myanmar Labour Minister, Tin Win, said the

Government would make a major announcement in a few days.

Talks have been held in secret between the military Government and Ms. Suu Kyi since September 2000. But little has emerged about the talks which many believe are in the confidence-building phase. Ms. Suu Kyi's release will go a long way in convincing the world that the junta is serious about restoring democracy in Myanmar.

There has been speculation that in return for her release, the junta will expect some humanitarian aid from the West.

Mr. Ismail, the Malaysian diplomat chosen as U.N. special envoy, met the junta leader, Than Shwe, in Yangon, in what is believed to be the first meeting of the kind in Yangon.

While hopes have been raised of a move forward in Myanmar, similar speculation in the past has remained just that.

Suu Kyi freedom hopes soar in Myanmar



Aung San Suu Kyi. (AP)

Yangon, April 30 (Reuters): Military ruled Myanmar was abuzz with speculation today that pro-democracy opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was set to be freed after 18 months in house arrest following a deal with the ruling junta.

The release of the 56-year-old Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, is one of the top demands of the international community. She has been kept confined to her lakeside Yangon residence, with her telephone line cut, since September 2000.

A source close to the ruling junta told Reuters the government was set to announce the release of Suu Kyi and a deal under which she would cooperate with the junta in administering humanitarian work in fields such as health and education.

"It will be more than the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and

some other political prisoners. It will be a breakthrough in Myanmar politics," the source said.

Razali Ismail, the UN special envoy to Myanmar, ended a four-day visit to the country on Friday saying he expected a breakthrough soon in the peace process.

Today, Razali told reporters in Kuala Lumpur that the expected major announcement could include the release of political prisoners or further freedom for political activities.

"The one that everyone expects is the release of Aung San Suu Kyi," the Malaysian diplomat said.

"Be patient. I think something big will happen."

The government began secret talks with Suu Kyi in October 2000, a move hailed as a breakthrough.

But since then no concrete

progress has been announced. The release of Suu Kyi is widely regarded as the single most important step the junta could take to show the increasingly impatient international community that it is considering political change.

Myanmar labour minister Tin Win told a news conference at the weekend that the government would make a major announcement "in a few days". Asked what progress had been achieved in the talks, he said: "Just wait and see."

Witnesses said a team of municipal workers were cleaning the road outside Suu Kyi's home this morning and repairing potholes.

Diplomats in Yangon confirmed speculation was rife that Suu Kyi would be freed, but pointed out that similar rumours have circulated before.

"Certainly the government has to announce something," one Western diplomat said. "It's hard to see how it could fail to include Suu's release. But we've been disappointed before."

Suu Kyi, the charismatic daughter of assassinated independence hero Aung San, was held under house arrest from 1989 to 1995. She was placed back under house arrest in 2000 after she embarrassed the government with several high-profile attempts to challenge travel restrictions that confined her to Yangon.

Her release in 1995 did not herald any political change. But analysts said if she had indeed agreed to limited cooperation with the ruling junta, this would be a major shift in her stance.

Previously she has refused all overtures from the military to work with them.

UN envoy in Myanmar for Suu Kyi freedom

AUNG HLA TUN
YANGON, APRIL 24

A TOP UN envoy met Myanmar's military leadership and Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Wednesday, in a bid to secure her release from house arrest and breathe life into slow-moving talks between the two sides.

UN special envoy Razali Ismail had a two-hour meeting with Suu Kyi in the early evening at her lakeside home, where the Nobel laureate has been confined since late 2000. The Malaysian diplomat met powerful military intelligence chief Khin Nyunt, officially number three in the ruling junta, and two ministers in the morning.

Diplomats say Razali is lobbying hard for Suu Kyi's immediate freedom, and suggest the envoy could even resign if he leaves Myanmar empty handed — a move that would seriously jeopardise the talks he brokered 18 months ago. A UN source said Razali had asked for a meeting with the junta's leader, Than Shwe, but had not yet received a reply. Razali, who has also met with foreign businessmen and ethnic minority leaders, has been upbeat about the talks.

"Razali told us there would be some manifestation of progress in a few weeks," one of a group of foreign businessmen who



met Razali on Wednesday said.

An ethnic minority leader who met Razali on Wednesday said the envoy was "cautiously optimistic" he could push the dialogue between Suu Kyi and the ruling generals forward, and was encouraged by the attitude of Khin Nyunt, who holds the post of "Secretary One" in the junta.

"Razali said he was satisfied to learn that Secretary One is very interested in the dialogue," said Khun Tun Oo, leader of the Opposition Shan National League for Democracy. Myanmar's neighbours have shown increasing signs of impatience at the lack of progress in the talks that have so far yielded the release of about 200 political prisoners but little else.

Diplomats say only Suu Kyi's release can help allay growing scepticism that the talks are being used by the ruling generals merely to end the poverty-stricken country's isolation and lift crippling sanctions imposed by many countries, including the US and Europe. —Reuters

Lanka Prez's brother joins protest rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, APRIL 24

R Sri Lanka's Opposition has bestirred itself into an aggressive protest mode, gathering in thousands in the capital against Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's ambitious peace plans based on previously unthinkable concessions to the LTTE. President Chandrika Kumaratunga's brother, Anura Ban-

Neighbourhood News

daranaika, joined a massive rally organised by Marxist Janatha Vimukti Peramuna yesterday to protest the government's plans to remove ban on LTTE and create an interim north-east administration under the rebels.

"Patriotic forces have come together to save the country and protect its territorial integrity and unitary character, even though we are not opposed to peace," Bandaranaike, former parliament Speaker, told the rally of over 5,000 people. It was the first big political protest faced by Wickremesinghe since he revived a Norway-backed peace process.

Maoists torch PM house

TERRY FRIEL & GOPAL SHARMA
KATHMANDU, APRIL 24

R EBELS fighting a bloody war to topple Nepal's constitutional monarchy torched the Prime Minister's country home overnight in the latest in a wave of high-profile raids on the kingdom's leadership.

Much of the poverty-ridden nation was paralysed by the second day of a national strike ordered by the Maoist guerrillas and backed by threats of violence. But a growing number of people began defying the five-day strike and more shops and businesses dared to open, unable to bear the cost of closing down for five days.

Some 100 rebels attacked Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's ancestral home overnight after ordering caretakers to flee and witnesses said the building was still smouldering on Wednesday, a senior local official, Narendra Raj Sharma, said by telephone.

"They came in, asked the people to come out, take their goods out of the house, and bombed it," he said. "No family member

was living there," he said, adding no one was hurt. Deuba lives in Kathmandu.

An investigation team was dispatched to the remote house and officials were waiting to hear from them. The rebels have attacked the village homes of two other ministers in the past two weeks, killing dozens of policemen.

In the capital, Kathmandu, nearly all shops, businesses and schools were closed and only a few taxis and buses were plying the streets, their number plates covered to avoid being identified by rebels. Soldiers and police, many toting automatic weapons, guarded the streets.

More shops opened on Wednesday and there was more traffic. Some people said they could not afford to stay shut. "How can I close for this long?" said grocer Baikuntha Khatri. "They shouldn't harass common people."



UN rights envoy meets

Suu Kyi

Associated Press

YANGON, Feb. 18. — A United Nations human rights investigator met Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi today after lengthy interviews with political prisoners in Yangon's main prison.

A car carrying Mr Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, entered Mrs Suu Kyi's lakeside compound in the capital, a witness said, speaking on condition of anonymity. No details of the meeting were available.

Mrs Suu Kyi leads the National League for Democracy Party that swept the 1990 general elections but was barred by the ruling military from taking power. Hundreds of NLD members have since been jailed.

Mrs Suu Kyi herself has been under house arrest since September 2000 for trying to travel outside Yangon for a political meeting.

THE STATESMAN

Death sentence for Ne Win's son-in-law, grandsons

Tim Johnston The Times, London

JAKARTA, Sept. 27. — Four members of Myanmar's former ruling family were sentenced to death by hanging on Thursday after a court found them guilty of treason. The court ruled that the son-in-law and three grandchildren of General Ne Win, who ruled the country with an iron hand for 26 years, had plotted to depose the Government.

Gen. Ne Win's grandsons, Aye Ne Win, 25, Kyaw Ne Win, 23, and Zwe Ne Win, 21, angrily told the court they would not appeal, while their father, Aye Zaw Win, remained silent.

Mr Pun Sein, the lawyer for the men, said he would try to persuade them to appeal within the seven-day period allowed. Bur-

ma's Supreme Court must endorse the verdict. Its deliberations start in seven days and there is a chance that the sentences could be commuted to life in prison. The verdict is a stunning blow for Gen. Win, whose family has remained influential behind the scenes since he stood down in 1998.

Although the 92-year-old general was not on trial, he has been under house arrest with his favourite daughter Mrs Sander Win at his huge lakeside estate in Yangon since his family was detained in March. Mrs Sander Win is the wife of Aye Zaw Win and the mother of Aye, Kyaw and Zwe Win. The military court found that the four men had tried to stage a coup with a small contingent of soldiers assigned to guard the former general.

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