

Release Suu Kyi, begin talks

P rime Minister Manmohan Singh's frank interaction with his Myanmar counterpart on the need to release the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and move towards "national reconciliation" may be the first categorical statement by an Indian Head of Government on this major issue. Of course, behind the scenes, in personal, bilateral discussions, leaders of several countries have tried to persuade the military leadership ruling Myanmar to not only free Ms. Suu Kyi, but also begin the long journey towards restoration of democracy. All that has been in vain. The military leadership has hardly progressed in its so-called national dialogue for reconciliation. The attempts to get a national convention to draft a new constitution for the country by bringing the numerous tribes and groups together appear to have made no headway, and the general impression is that the junta is not very keen on completing the exercise early and putting a democratic framework in place. The military's primary objective seems to be to ensure for itself a statutory role in the socio-political system and a permanent place in government. Earlier, the military rulers wanted to adopt the Indonesian model in which the Armed Forces have a significant presence in Parliament and consequently in governance. Established by President Suharto, it survived for three decades. When he was dethroned, the system collapsed; that the incumbent President is a former Army General is a different matter.

After his meeting with Mr. Soe Win in Kuala Lumpur on the sidelines of the East Asian summit, Mr. Manmohan Singh came out loud and clear: "We favoured national reconciliation and also the movement towards democracy, respect for fundamental human rights and allowing political activities to flourish." Though the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has not been so vocal in enunciating its stand, its Foreign Ministers are reported to have decided to send a team to Yangon to assess the situation and discuss the emerging crisis with the military rulers. There is no guarantee that the military junta will respond to such friendly counsel from neighbours. Myanmar has already given up its chair of the ASEAN standing committee to avoid further embarrassment to the regional grouping. Till now, there has been no commitment by the military leadership to work for national reconciliation or to restore democracy. The least the military rulers can do now is to release Ms. Suu Kyi, involve her and the National League for Democracy in drafting the new constitution and set a time frame for holding democratic elections. Given her commitment to peace, democracy and non-violence, they can be rest assured that she will cooperate fully with them in any genuine effort to put Myanmar back on the road to democracy and development. The earlier the generals make these moves the better, for Myanmar's people have suffered for too long at their hands.

THE HINDU

Sham in Myanmar

19/12 A convention to draft the Constitution 5/16

The national constitutional convention, that began in Myanmar last week, carries within it the seeds of a disgraceful failure. The effort is a sham and comes after two critical developments: the six-month extension of Suu Kyi's detention; and after the Security Council agreed to hold a closed-door briefing on the country. It is unlikely that there will be any takers for the assurance reeled off by the junta in the inaugural address. General Thein Sein's faith in democracy is almost comforting. But going by ground realities, the effort seems to be geared to further entrench the military. It has been in power since 1993 and the saccharine pledge on democracy comes 15 years after Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won the election, but was not allowed to rule. No wonder the NLD is now boycotting the convention as is the party representing the Shan people.

The convention hardly reflects popular aspirations as its composition is anything but democratic. What the junta now touts as the "road map" to democracy ought to include people's participation, notably those who have been democratically elected. It must above all be conducted in a democratic environment. It has been convened when Suu Kyi and her associates are in prison, a fact that makes a mockery of all the pompous talk of a transition to democracy. It will be difficult to accept the contention that the junta wants democracy to be Myanmar's new way of life. A draft Constitution is unlikely. A convention on the subject may be the junta's way of hoodwinking the people. It is just as well that Suu Kyi remains unmoved.

15 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN



Suu Kyi: Democracy cry

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Asean push for Suu Kyi

Kuala Lumpur, Dec. 11
(Reuters): Southeast Asia's regional grouping wants to send an envoy to visit Myanmar Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Malaysia said today, marking an extraordinary step by its own gentle standards of diplomacy.

The Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) usually avoids involvement in member states' affairs but is running out of patience with military-ruled Myanmar, saying it feels embarrassed at the junta's lack of progress towards democracy.

"You see Myanmar has always asked us to speak on their behalf. I think we have done that for a long time," foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar said.

"We cannot be keeping on promising people.... We must be able to come back to ourselves and say, yes, I have met Suu Kyi, yes, I have met with some of the leaders, and they are really undertaking their own political reconciliation."

12 DEC 2005

THE ASSOCIATION

I can say without hesitation that Senior General Than Shwe is mentally unstable and that the current state of the Myanmar regime reflects the disorder in his vicious and increasingly paranoid mind.

Observers in Yangon have noted that the regime's decision to relocate its administrative offices to a remote region of central Myanmar is a sign the military government has become even more introspective and — as the cautiously optimistic among them add — unsustainable.

The move was not decided by exhaustive Cabinet-level debate and informed research. There was no attempt to sound out public opinion on the matter or reach a consensus among government officials and civil servants. This rash and inadvisable course proceeded from the cracked mind of one man: Than Shwe.

In consultation with his astrologers, Myanmar's general initiated the move because of predictions that Yangon could see bloodshed and even the fall of the regime by next month. Though construction of government offices and other infrastructure projects was not yet complete, ministry officials had to pack their things into a convoy of trucks and beat a path out of the capital. The subsequent confusion and anger among the country's civil servants should have been anticipated.

Increasingly, the rumour "Than Shwe is mad" is spreading among cowed down residents and senior government officials. His unaccountable behaviour has created so much chaos and desperation among officials that some even have health problems.

Home affairs minister Maung Oo recently suffered a heart attack and was flown to Singapore for treatment. Others in government and the military believe that Myanmar is careening towards disaster, and there is little anyone can do about it. Than Shwe's renowned

Drafts are required to submit with their... in other departments, works carried... years giving designation and address... acuted. Earnest money in favour of... along with tender is required to be... who have no Standing Security... mations:

Estimated Cost (Rs. in lakh)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Cost of Tender documents
07.95	15,900	Rs. 500 in the form of Demand Draft in favour of GE(P) Kolkata

paranoia has pro... to insulate him... group of ultra-lo... despot is never u... Reports suggest

Senior General... shall be accompanied with the cost... the junta's No 2... Draft as mentioned above against... the Pynnmana... in favour of GE (P) Kolkata. Cost of... be looking to re... if tender documents are issued to... manders for sup... roved by the Accepting Officer... his boss.

Perhaps a regi... of enlistment in other departments... in the offing... out by them during the last 2/3 years

But Maung Aye's hands are tied at the moment. He can make no move against Than Shwe without the blessing of all the regime's senior leaders.

Myanmar seems to have few alternatives now, and Yangon's fabled road map to democracy seems all but dead — if it ever lived at all. The regime expects to resume its National Convention to draw up a constitution in the coming months.

If completed, a national referendum and elections would follow. Observers in the capital, however, say that Than Shwe recently held meetings with senior advisers to determine whether he had any chance of winning an election. Advised that such a chance would be slim, his reported response was: "Forget about elections."

If these reports are true, the likelihood of the National Convention accomplishing its intended purpose is slight.

Myanmar has languished under Than Shwe's degenerate and ruthless dictatorship for more than a decade. The country's committed and courageous Opposition cannot — through passive resistance or complete inaction — allow him to extend his rule. Global political issues aside, it is their very future that is at stake.

It should be remembered that outside forces — Opposition groups and the international community at



Senior Gene

large — can p... effective suppo... movement insic... Without such... there is little h... change.

There have l... aging signs rece... international co... greater willing... reforms. A... expressed dee... with the junta... towards pro... regional bloc st... failed policy o... engagement, b... members have... vocal in their... Yangon.

The junta's... forego its cha

... requests should be sent to Varana... be 90 days. Telegraphic/Telex/Fax quotations a... are likely to be ignored. The offers complete... upto 15.00 hrs. and will be opened at 15.30... Terms and Conditions and delivery requireme... The undersigned reserves the right to ac... without assigning any reason thereof. Sched... & Bid documents can be downloaded... www.dietalacow... P.R.O./D.L.W/S

HEADQUARTERS SOUTH E BORDER SECURITY FORC TAGOREVILLA, ALAM BAZA

Tender Notice: WW/Proc/77

Sealed tenders are invited by the Security Force HQ (Water Wing), Tagorevilla, Alam Bazar for periodical / statutory repair of Vessel Bikram.

SPECIFICATION OF MV BIKRAM

- a) Length —
- b) Width —
- c) Draught —
- d) Weight —
- e) Made of —
- f) Make & Model of Engine —
- g) Manufacturer —
- h) Fuel Capacity —
- i) Fresh Water Capacity —
- j) Speed —

2. The tender forms, covering terms and conditions, and specifications, are available for inspection from 15th Nov., 2005 onward and up to 15th Dec., 2005 during office hours i.e. Monday to Friday from 10-00 hrs. to 17-00 hrs. against cash payment of Rs. 200 only which is non-refundable. The tender forms should be submitted up to 11-00 hrs. on 20th Dec., 2005 at 12-00 hrs. on 20th Dec., 2005.

MILITARY ENGINEER

MES, Commander Works Engineers, Bengdubi, Po. Pin Code: 734424, invites application by 26th Dec., 2005 from MES/PWD/CPWD and Railway Contractors of the area for the following works:

Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs. in lakh)	Period of completion
REPAIRS TO CERTAIN ROADS OF SOUTH ZONE AREA AT BINNAGURI	23.50	06 (six) Months

NOTE:

1. The cost of tender forms/documents (in blank) for tender (Rupees five hundred only). Applicants (contractors) shall submit Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque of Rupees five hundred from GE(S), Binnaguri along with their application for issue of tender form. The cost of Bank charges for procurement of Banker's Cheque. The Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque shall be submitted along with the application for issue of tender form is accepted and tender form is issued to contractor after scrutiny and selection. However, it shall not be returned to the contractor if the tender form is not issued. The contractor shall become automatically entitled for issue of tender form. The contractor shall submit Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque along with the application and the contractor shall be entitled to issue of tender form. The contractor shall not be entitled to issue of tender form without Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque. Application for issue of tender without Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque shall be treated as non-entitled. Any claim whatsoever on this account shall not be entertained.
2. Invitation for applications for issue of tender does not constitute an offer of tender to the applicant even if the applicant is an enlisted contractor of the area. The award of tender shall be decided by the Accepting Officer based on inter alia the technical, financial and experience of similar works executed by the applicant. The contractor shall consider applications received up to the date of receipt of application for issue of tender. The contractor shall not be entitled to appeal to the next higher Engineer Authority in respect of the award of tender received after the due date of receipt of application/extension of time.
3. The decision of the next higher Engineer Authority shall not be entitled for any compensation whatsoever.

For details see Indian Trade Journal dated 01 Dec 2005

VV

Suu Kyi's detention extended officially

S. Kyi - Myanmar

ASSOCIATE PRESS 98-6

YANGON, NOVEMBER 27

REUTERS 26/11



MYANMAR'S pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi appeared to remain under house arrest following today's expiration of a previous detention order, with police paying her a brief visit and government security around her home tightened. Officials from the country's secretive military regime could not be reached to confirm the action, and a spokesman for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party said he had no news of a change in her status.

Spokesman U Lwin said he had not received any news of the order, nor had he heard from Suu Kyi, who is under virtual solitary confinement at

her residence in the Myanmar capital, allowed no outside visitors and no telephone contact.

U Lwi, who himself has been under house arrest three times in the past, noted that today was the day when a previous one-year detention order would expire. "...According to the procedure, if there is an extension, today would be the day," he said.

Why is the junta afraid of Suu Kyi?

One step forward, two steps back. That sums up the Myanmar ruling military junta's approach to the peace process, which is expected to restore democracy in the country at some point in the future. The opposition National League for Democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, is an icon of democracy on the world stage. She has been under house arrest for the better part of the last 15 years. Her supporters have calculated that Ms. Suu Kyi has indeed been detained for a period of 10 years since 1989, when she was first arrested. The NLD swept the last general election, which the junta held in 1990 and then promptly annulled. There has been no real movement since then towards a return to democracy. Senior General Than Shwe and his military colleagues continue to rule Myanmar with an iron hand. They have shown scant regard for international public opinion, or even the "friendly counsel" of Southeast Asian neighbours. The international community, tired of imposing sanctions and pressing the generals to have a serious dialogue with Ms. Suu Kyi, has again turned to the Association of South East Asian Nations, of which Myanmar is a member, for turning the screws on the military junta. But this has not worked, as is evidenced by Yangon's decision to give up the Chair of ASEAN's standing committee rather than agree to initiate a dialogue to restore democracy.

In the face of such intransigence, Ms. Suu Kyi, following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, has led one of the great non-violent political struggles of our time. A few of the generals, including Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, who favoured a dialogue were removed from power — and also "detained." For over a decade now, the junta has taken cover behind a seemingly interminable process of drafting a new Constitution. A National Convention was established to prepare a draft, but nothing has come out of it. Initially, the Generals wanted to adopt the 'Indonesian model' to ensure a social and political role for the military. However, with the collapse of General Suharto in 1998, that model went out of the window. Rather than reconcile themselves to the inevitable and let the people elect a government of their choice, the military rulers are hanging on to power. It was high time the international community, led by ASEAN, stepped up the pressure on Yangon to meet specific targets. It appears there are inhibitions about pushing Myanmar again into a path of isolation and closer to China. Interventionism, which comes up against national sovereignty, deservedly has a bad name on the world stage. But the junta's continued detention of Ms. Suu Kyi, its refusal to take any concrete step towards allowing people to choose their rulers, and its gross human rights violations provide more than sufficient reason to focus international attention in an effective way on Myanmar.