

over the last two years - and loss of credibility.

# Fraud in Myanmar

Junta extends Suu Kyi's detention

Aung San Suu Kyi has spent no less than a decade under house arrest and yet commands far greater respect than the ruling generals in Yangon. It is with sheer brute force, therefore, that General Than Shwe has had thechutzpah to defy the comity of nations and the UN secretary-general to extend her house arrest by another year. The weekend action confirms the junta's shambolic faith in a constitution, democracy and the electoral system. And the surreptitious nature of the move becomes clear from the fact that the establishment has stopped short of a public announcement. Ironically, the extension of detention coincides with the 16th anniversary of Suu Kyi's landslide victory. She was never allowed to assume power. And now for all the talk of a national constitution drafting commission, the generals have only entrenched themselves further. It is a desperate attempt to tighten the screws on an icon of the democratic movement in Asia as the extended detention smacks of vindictiveness. The army's position has been decidedly awkward since last year following Suu Kyi's boycott of the constitution convention, a sham if ever there was one. It's the junta that decides its composition and manner of functioning. Her refusal to be part of this spurious exercise stems from the very real fear that her party, the National League for Democracy, is bound to be used as a rubber-stamp to confirm whatever the junta may decide. She has stood on her principles and the military hasn't quite reconciled itself to this firmness.

Indeed, an indication of the junta's desperation was evident when it threatened to dissolve the NLD on the unsubstantiated charge that it had links with illegal organisations. The NLD doesn't exist on the military's sufferance; it is a formidable party in its own right. The government still refuses to accept the demand that parliament be convened with the members who were elected in 1990. Further detention of Suu Kyi has served to erode the junta's credibility. Any attempt to dissolve her party will only expose the fraud being perpetrated for the past 16 years in the name of governance.

THE STATESMAN

# Myanmar defends detention

Indo-Asian News Service

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 — Myanmar's foreign minister said here today the extension of Opposition leader Ms Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest was a domestic issue and, therefore, the right of the ruling military junta.

Myanmar's military regime extended Ms Suu Kyi's house arrest on Saturday by another year. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate has been kept under arrest for the last three years. Myanmar's foreign minister Mr Nyan Win, who is in Malaysia for a two-day Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting of foreign ministers, did not give reasons for the extension.



Ms Aung San Suu Kyi

"This is not an international issue," he told reporters on the sidelines of the meeting. "This is only a domestic issue." Mr Nyan Win said there were no plans to speak to his Malaysian and Thai counterparts regarding the extension. Both the countries have voiced their disappointment over the extension.

On Saturday, Malaysian foreign minister Syed

Hamid Albar had said NAM members would try and seek Myanmar's explanation for the detention order.

However, Syed Hamid, who headed a fact-finding team of south-east Asian delegates to Myanmar in March, where he was denied a meeting with Suu Kyi, said today that it was unlikely for him to meet Nyan Win during the two-day meeting due to shortage of time.

"So far in our meetings, nobody has brought (the extension) up," Syed Hamid told reporters on the sidelines of the meeting. "We have discussed human rights, but nothing specific yet," he said. Malaysia is the current chair of NAM.

30 MAY 2001

THE STATESMAN

# Military regime extends Suu Kyi's detention

U.N. official's visit fails to change the situation

P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE:** Myanmar's military rulers are understood to have extended the detention of the celebrated democracy campaigner, Aung San Suu Kyi, dousing the flicker of hope raised by Ibrahim Gambari, United Nations Under-Secretary General, who was allowed to visit her in Yangon a few days ago.

Mr. Gambari noted, after meeting her, that she seemed to be well and that the military government was perhaps signalling a possible shift in attitude towards the long-imprisoned leader.

## Dampened mood

The reported extension of Ms. Suu Kyi's house arrest comes almost immediately after U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's appeal to Myanmar junta leader Senior General Than Shwe for her release.

The news of her continued detention for an indefinite period dampened the mood of her National League for Democracy (NLD) on the 16th anniversary of its overwhelming triumph in the 1990 elections, a people's mandate that the junta did not honour. A Nobel Peace Prize winner and a practitioner of the



Aung San Suu Kyi

Gandhian ideal of non-violent political struggle, Ms. Suu Kyi has suffered long periods of detention.

Her current term began nearly three years ago on the basis of accusations that NLD activists had clashed with pro-junta followers at her alleged instigation during her political tour across northern Myanmar.

# Keeping the heat on

IB Gambari  
Myanmar  
5/27

**I**N the next few days, the Burmese junta leaders have a critical decision to make. One choice is to remain an isolated pariah state, such as it has been for decades. Or it can reform itself and join the international community, integrating with the rest of the world like a normal nation. The first choice would be easy, because the junta would not have to do anything - just cling to power and maintain the status quo.

Since 1988, the military leaders have ruled with an iron fist over what was once the most dynamic country in South-east Asia, cracking down on any moves by pro-democracy groups, including politicians and civilians.

So far, they have proved, foolishly, that they can stand up to international pressure and allow their people to languish in misery and deprivation. They thought if they were stubborn enough, the global community would cave in, because after all, there are tons of problems around the world besides the Burma question that require international attention.

The second choice would be the better one, but it would require much sacrifice that the junta leaders are not readily known for.

Some promising signs have come out of Rangoon this past week, but the future of Burma remains very bleak. Ibrahim Gambari, the UN under-secretary-general for political affairs, visited Rangoon and met with Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. He was the highest-ranking UN official yet to visit the beleaguered country.

His meeting with Suu Kyi gave rise to hopes she might be released when her house-arrest term expires on Saturday (May 27).

The Burmese junta can either cling to power and maintain the status quo or reform itself and join the international community. In any case, the UN and Asean must respond, and fast

But they do not address the question of how the junta leaders might be persuaded to move the national reconciliation process forwards.

They have resisted progress in this regard ever since the May 1990 election, trying systematically to undermine the opposition movement, especially Suu Kyi's status as pro-democracy leader.

Suu Kyi's freedom will remain a pivotal issue that the Rangoon dictatorship must come to terms with.

If she remains confined to her home, like she has been for 10 of the past 17 years, then even if the regime does become more cooperative with international organizations, so as to attract more humanitarian assistance, the international community will not budge.

The recent possible softening of the pariah state's stance has been

and political reform continue.

Asean wants to see tangible political progress inside Burma, especially some level of formal engagement between the junta leaders and the opposition. The regional grouping is no longer willing to speak on behalf of this regime, as it has plunged Asean's credibility and image to an all-time low. Asean leaders have pressed Burma for greater reform. They have asked the pariah state to rebuild trust with its fellow Asean members and work together in a collaborative spirit, in order to improve the situation.

Unfortunately, the regime has always had its own game plan, which was evident in the seven-point democracy plan it put forward three years ago. The plan entailed the regime remaining in the driver's seat and perpetuating its grip on power.

Under the plan, the constitutional drafting process would be completed by the end of the year, to be followed by a national referendum. The junta leaders are hoping that when a general election is held to legitimise their leadership, the regional and international outcries will have subsided.

The election process continues to be an instrument that the regime manipulates to its own advantage, but the wholesale electoral fraud of May 1990 remains fresh in the international community's memory.

By Saturday, we will learn which option the Rangoon junta will choose, and this will reveal its attitude towards the world and its plans for the future.

Then, the international community - but especially the UN and Asean - must respond.

■The Nation/ANN.



Gambari's insistence that Suu Kyi be part of the political process should serve as a good indication that any political settlement inside Burma requires her partici-

the outcome of two years of persistent pressure on the part of its Asean peers, which have suffered greatly from the constant lies by Rangoon that she would be freed

25 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

# Fear and repression in Myanmar

HD-11 29/5

16,000 forced from homes as generals try to annihilate resistance.

John Aglionby

AS SOON as Sayc Pler Paw saw her brother's body, she knew that everyone in her village would have to abandon their homes and flee to the relative safety of the surrounding jungle-covered hills. "I found him in the family's vegetable plot," she said. "He had been shot in the bottom, the navel, badly beaten in the back of the neck and forehead and then shot in the face."

Ms. Sayc Pler Paw, an ethnic Karen, has no doubt that the perpetrators were the Myanmarese army. And she knew the meaning of her brother's brutal death.

"Only the [army] could have done this and the fact that he had been killed meant they were coming to attack us," she said, clutching her three-year-old daughter, Snowda Sayc. After years of barely noticed and largely piecemeal operations against the Karen National Union (KNU), the ethnic minority's resistance movement, Myanmar's junta has launched its biggest offensive in Karen state since 1997. The army's operations are seen as a bid to annihilate the largest of the half-dozen ethnic minority fighting forces ranged against it.

Since seizing power in 1962, the military has turned Myanmar into one of the most repressed countries on earth. The only time the generals allowed an election, in 1990, they were soundly defeated by the National League for Democracy, led by Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

She was never allowed to take office and since then the repression has increased dramatically. Forced labour is common. Ms. Suu Kyi is among the estimated 1,300 political prisoners and all democratic institutions have been emasculated.

As the economy has collapsed and international demands for change have mounted, the junta's paranoia has risen markedly. Last year it moved the capital from Yangon to a heavily fortified city near Pyinmana, deep in the jungle.

The junta's Information Minister, Brigadier Kyaw Hsan, admitted last week that the army is attempting to "clear up" the last of the KNU "terrorist" resistance, and recent media reports have labelled events in remote eastern Burma as a war or conflict.

## Resistance

But in fact the under-equipped, poorly trained forces of the Myanmarese army are refusing to take on the several thousand-strong Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), which has perfected its guerrilla tactics over 57 years of resistance. The forces are instead trying to eliminate the KNLA by starving it of money, food and recruits through the systematic razing of all Karen villages in the predominantly highland areas they do not control.

Fewer than 100 civilians have been killed since the offensive began in November because as soon as villagers are tipped off about an attack, they flee. This year the operation has spread, and recently the number of destroyed villages has climbed to more than 60, with more

than 16,000 people on the run, according to reports from advocacy groups such as the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG).

Aid groups say tens of thousands of civilians are under imminent threat because the junta appears to be forgoing its usual withdrawal for the monsoon season, which has just begun.

The *Guardian* met Ms. Sayc Pler Paw in Ei Tu Hta, a camp by the Thai border where more than 800 Karen civilians have sought refuge. The terrain surrounding the camp is thick forest covering steep-sided hills. Paths through the vegetation are rare; the fact that all relief supplies are carried in by people wading up a stream from the Salween river that divides Myanmar and Thailand is indicative of the arduous conditions the villagers have had to endure to reach the camp.

The suffering the Karen have endured is etched on the refugees' faces, particularly the children. Many wonder around aimlessly or just pass the time in their huts with their few belongings neatly stacked so as to be ready to be grabbed if an attack seems imminent. Most wear donated clothes, with the preponderance of T-shirts from foreign towns and organisations testament to the Karen's global support network.

Virtually everyone has similar tales of flight and a fear-filled journey, sometimes lasting weeks, through the jungle. The camp has an air of developing permanence. More than 150 five-by-four-metre bamboo and thatch huts have been built, complete with ceramic squat lavatories nearby; makeshift water purification centres have been established, a clinic has been built and the camp authorities are distributing seeds.

"We have to act like this to give the people some hope," said camp secretary Saw Bee. "But the reality is we cannot guarantee the security despite having some KNLA fighters here as guards. We have nowhere else to go. This is the end of the line for us if we want to stay in our homeland."

International pressure against the generals is mounting. The U.N. Security Council discussed Myanmar for the first time last December, and seems likely to do so again soon, and parliamentarians from around the world – including Britain – have demanded that their governments take a firmer line against Yangon. Last week the Myanmarese allowed the first visit by a U.N. envoy in two years, although many believe it was intended as a diversion from its repression of opposition groups.

Pado Manh Sha, the KNU general secretary, believes the junta will only respond to pressure from its biggest trading partners, China and India. "We've sent delegates to China and India to lobby," he said. "We've been told to expect a policy review but nothing has happened."

Meanwhile, back in the jungle, the waiting and praying goes on as the population at Ei Tu Hta swells every day. "So many people are out in the jungle but they can't survive there for long," Mr. Saw Bee said. – ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

24 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

# Countdown to freedom

**T**HE outside world has had its first direct word from Aung San Suu Kyi in nearly three years. The next week could mean everything or nothing for the imprisoned democratic leader of Burma (Myanmar). The Burmese junta's surprise decision to grant a senior United Nations official access to the 1991 Nobel peace laureate has revived hope she may be released.

This week, the generals who crushed Suu Kyi's democracy movement will decide whether to extend her house arrest beyond its present term, which expires on Saturday. That day will mark the 16th anniversary of her overwhelming election victory. The military dictatorship ignored that and she has spent 10 of the past 17 years imprisoned.

Ibrahim Gambari, the under secretary of the United Nations, became since March 2004 the first person from outside the secretive and oppressive state, to see one of the world's most prominent political prisoners. She is in virtual solitary confinement and in the absence of contact with the outside world rumours arose that Ms Suu Kyi, now 60, is slowly being poisoned.

In Bangkok, Mr Gambari said she was physically sound. "She is well, but of course she is still under restriction," he said. The Nigerian envoy spent 45 minutes with Ms Suu Kyi, who was brought to see him from her overgrown lakeside villa in Rangoon. He said he must report to the UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, before saying more.

Among democracy activists the unexpected meeting was seen as a political breakthrough. U Lwin, secretary of Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, said: "This is an improvement on the part of the authorities. I think this is progress. It is quite likely that her detention might not be extended this time." Other party members had doubts. "I don't think expectations should be too high because of just one meeting," said Win Myint. "We should wait and see the developments before drawing positive conclusions." On Saturday, an imposing black car with tinted windows left Suu Kyi's residence and whisked her to a government guesthouse five minutes away, and returned within the hour.

Earlier, Mr Gambari had toured the new administrative capital at Naypyidaw, near Pynmamma, where civil servants were ordered to move last November. There, close to the jungle stronghold where Ms Suu Kyi's war hero father, General Aung San, had launched Burma's independence movement, the UN envoy met the country's absolute ruler, General Than Shwe.

The supremo forbids the men-

Seventeen years after she was first put under house arrest, will Aung San Suu Kyi finally taste liberty?

JAN MCGIRK and DANIEL HOWDEN report



tion of Aung San Suu Kyi's name in his presence, but diplomats said talks touched on Burma's humanitarian challenges, restrictions on international aid groups and, in particular, a bru-

tal army offensive that has displaced thousands of ethnic Karen tribespeople. "Gambari accomplished something the previous UN envoys have not been able to do." U Lwin said.

"This makes us optimistic. Slowly, slowly, catch the monkey. Yet it's hard to say that the path is open for changes." While the generals tout a road map to democracy and called for a con-

## 'Constructive engagement' has paid few dividends

**W**HEN the Burmese junta executed a U-turn and welcomed a UN envoy this weekend for the first time in more than two years, political analysts saw self-interest at work. Few expect the generals to heed calls for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi; detaining the Nobel peace laureate is their trump card.

But for a regime that lives up to the West's low expectations, displaying the Opposition leader unharmed was guaranteed to garner a few brownie points. It's the start of wily manoeuvring as Asian leaders gear up to bring economic pressure on this resource-rich country. Increased revenue from China and India has been making the junta more strident because sanctions from the European Union and the USA have lost some of their bite. Since 1988, the generals have systematically impoverished the Burmese through fiscal folly, while ramping up political repression.

Anwar Ibrahim, the former deputy prime minister of Malaysia, cites Burma as Asia's "greatest embarrassment and failure". He argues that Burma should not be "coaxed into reform" but that the junta should work towards regional "security, development, and justice". Meanwhile, the vast teak forests are chopped to supply furniture for Asia's rising middle classes and denuded

slopes are planted with rubber trees to supply latex for China's burgeoning automobile industry.

The human trafficking of desperate Burmese migrants exports misery to neighbouring China, India, Thailand, Bangladesh and Laos. Asia's policy of "constructive engagement" through trade with the intransigent junta has paid very few dividends so far.

Singapore and South Korea are intent on getting payback for their investment. The invitation to the UN envoy, Ibrahim Gambari, could hardly have been more timely. Less than a month ago, the UN passed a resolution condemning any government that fails to protect civilians from armed conflict. The USA pointedly took Burma's Karen rebels off their terrorism blacklist.

But the State Peace and Development Council has ordered its army to step up a campaign against the Karen - ethnic Christian guerrillas who have fought Rangoon for five decades. Diplomats say it is the most intensive crackdown in a decade. Karen villagers who held their ground were slaughtered. Since December, 1,800 Karen villagers have fled to Thailand. Another 15,000 have been made homeless.

■ Jan McGirk

stitutional convention to rubber-stamp a military government, the NLD boycotted these proceedings and labelled them a sham. The junta threatened to dissolve the pro-democracy party for its alleged links with illegal organisations, which they blame for recent bombings in the capital.

"The government has enough evidence to declare the NLD an unlawful association for its links with terrorist groups and exiled dissident organisations," one minister said. Feeling the heat, numerous party members have resigned. Last week, the US Senate passed a resolution condemning attacks on Karen insurgents, the most deadly in a decade, and urged the UN Security Council to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Ms Suu Kyi and all prisoners of conscience in Burma. The country has been under repressive military rule since 1962. Since the present junta took power in 1988, some 1,100 prisoners of conscience remain in prison. The junta supports isolation from the West and closer ties with China and India.

"The regime has consistently played the Suu Kyi card whenever it got backed into a corner, either to relieve outside pressure or to stage a diplomatic coup to win hearts and minds at home and abroad," said Aung Zaw, a Burmese commentator exiled in northern Thailand.

Ms Suu Kyi never intended to be a heroine for Burmese democracy. She was nursing her ailing mother in Rangoon when General Ne Win staged the coup in 1988 and the military fired on student protestors, killing thousands. She spoke out against army brutality and was detained at gunpoint and put under house arrest at her family's rundown house. But she became revered as an icon for the dispossessed and a thorn in the junta's side. Admirers would mob Ms Suu Kyi whenever she was allowed to travel in her country, from 1995-2000 and for a few months in 2002-03. Her passion for Burma meant less contact with her two sons, both in their thirties and in the UK. While she was imprisoned, her husband, the Oxford don Michael Aris, died of prostate cancer in 1999. Suu Kyi did not go to visit him on his deathbed because she feared the generals would block her return.

General Than Shwe assumed her message was becoming irrelevant, but was astounded by the excitement her speaking tours generated. In May 2003, her convoy was attacked by government thugs and Burma's stubborn hero, known as the Titanium Orchid, was locked up again.

■ The Independent

# U.N. envoy expresses concern over restrictions placed on Suu Kyi

Myanmar junta allows meeting with democracy leader after global pressure

P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE:** The meeting between United Nations Under-Secretary General Ibrahim Gambari and Myanmar's celebrated democracy campaigner, Aung San Suu Kyi, is seen in Southeast Asian diplomatic circles as a welcome development.

There is no immediate indication, though, about the future course of action by Myanmar's military ruler, Senior General Than Shwe, on the inter-related issues of releasing Ms. Suu Kyi from prolonged detention and allowing her to promote the democracy agenda.

Mr. Gambari is understood to have noted, after his meeting with Ms. Suu Kyi in Yangon, that she is still under restrictions and expressed his concern. He is the first foreign dignitary to have been allowed to meet her since the international community intensified pressure on Myanmar's



Aung San Suu Kyi

rulers to let the world know something about her treatment under detention and her political plans.

When Myanmar "voluntarily" decided to give up its turn to chair the ASEAN this year, the other members

of the association played a critical role in persuading Sr. Gen. Than Shwe take that step.

Thereafter, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Malaysian Foreign Minister Hamid Albar visited Myanmar on behalf of the ASEAN. But they were not allowed to meet Ms. Suu Kyi to ascertain her condition and views. So, Myanmar is now seen to have asserted its autonomy as a member of the ASEAN by preferring the U.N. as an interlocutor in this case.

A Western view is that Sr. Gen. Than Shwe has now buckled under pressure from the United States in allowing a U.N. official's visit to Ms. Suu Kyi. However, a view in Southeast Asia is that Myanmar wants to signal that it treats its main political prisoner in a much better way than the record of the U.S. at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere.

MAR 1006

THE HINDU

washingtonpost.com

## Rice Condemns Burma as Oppressive Holdout in Asia

By Alan Sipress  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Thursday, March 16, 2006; A16

JAKARTA, Indonesia, March 15 -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice sharply criticized Burma's military government Wednesday for denying the aspirations of its people. She described it as an oppressive holdout in a region moving increasingly toward democracy.

Speaking during the second day of a visit to Indonesia, Rice condemned Burma's rulers for bankrupting their once vibrant economy and shuttering universities that had previously attracted top scholars.

Her tough remarks, which echoed earlier administration criticisms, capped an address surveying the state of U.S. relations with countries across Southeast Asia.

"A country that was once the jewel of Southeast Asia is now out of step with the entire modern experience of the region," Rice told an audience of scholars, politicians, businessmen and students at the Indonesia Council on World Affairs. Citing Burma's decision late last year to relocate its capital to a remote, interior site, she said, "The Burmese regime is now literally retreating into the depths of the country, closing its people off from the world and robbing them of their future."

The U.S. government has progressively imposed economic sanctions on Burma over the last decade in hopes of pushing its ruling generals toward political change and winning the release of the detained democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi. Burma's military rulers have maintained tight control since they rejected the results of a 1990 election won in a landslide by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy.

With few formal contacts remaining between Burma and the United States, U.S. officials have been looking to the leaders of Burma's neighbors to press the cause of political change.

"Democracy still faces determined opponents, and where freedom is under attack it must be defended," Rice said, noting that Indonesians had successfully established a democratic system in recent years after the country's longtime dictator, Suharto, was ousted in 1998 during mass protests.

Two weeks ago, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono traveled to Burma and called on its rulers to keep the rest of Southeast Asia informed about internal political changes. He also urged them to allow in monitors from countries in the region.

While these steps were modest, they reflect a new willingness by Burma's neighbor countries to intervene in its domestic affairs. Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had long rejected what they called meddling in one another's internal matters.

Late last year, ASEAN agreed to dispatch Malaysia's foreign minister, Syed Hamid Albar, on a mission to Burma to assess whether the government intended to proceed with democratic reforms as it had



promised. But Burma has repeatedly rebuffed Albar's request to visit.

Rice praised ASEAN for its recent efforts to move Burma toward democracy. She also noted that the U.N. Security Council was reviewing the situation there.

"So long as the proud people of this great nation remain oppressed, there can be no business as usual in Southeast Asia," Rice said.

During her remarks, Rice emphasized the U.S. desire to cooperate with ASEAN in confronting a variety of security challenges. Several Southeast Asian governments, including U.S. allies, have criticized the Bush administration for its apparent reluctance to engage with the organization. They have warned that the U.S. approach is ceding influence to China.

Rice outlined three areas of concern, including the hazard posed by pirates and other criminals to crucial shipping lanes in the Malacca Strait, a narrow strip of water between Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. She also cited the danger of epidemic illnesses, most recently bird flu, and the continuing threat of terrorism carried out by radical groups such as the Jemaah Islamiah underground in Indonesia and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.

On the economic front, Rice said the United States would continue to promote free trade in the region.

© 2006 The Washington Post Company

**Ads by Google**

**See the video**

Torture & forced confessions alleged at Guantanamo!  
[www.kuwaitifreedom.org](http://www.kuwaitifreedom.org)

**Indonesian Lawyer**

Hadromi & Partners - a law firm provides a wide range of services  
[www.hadromi.com](http://www.hadromi.com)

**Free Burma**

Free Burma T shirts Aung San Suu Kyi Design  
[www.cafepress.com/freeburma](http://www.cafepress.com/freeburma)

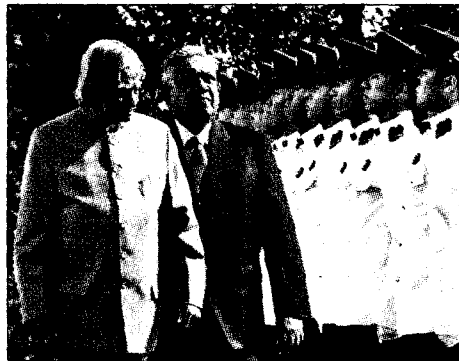
# Kalam first President to visit Myanmar

By Akshaya Mukul/TNN

**Singapore:** With both China and Pakistan continuing to make deep strategic inroads into Myanmar, an Indian President will now be travelling to Yangon for the first time ever.

President A P J Abdul Kalam, dismissing any notions of being a reluctant traveller, said on Wednesday that he would be making a state visit to Myanmar in March as part of the government's "Look-East" policy.

In 1987, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had visited Yangon. With India shunning the military junta in Myanmar for many years in support of the democratic



President Abdul Kalam, along with his Singapore counterpart S R Nathan, during a welcome ceremony at the Presidential Palace

movement led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, China and Pakistan had stepped into the vacuum. It's only in recent years that India has started actively engaging Myanmar.

In 2003, vice-president Bhairon Singh Shekhawat led a delegation to Myanmar. This was followed by chairman of the state peace and development council senior General Than Shwe and wife Daw Kyaing Kyaing making a state visit to India in October 2004.

During General Than Shwe's visit, the two countries signed three MoUs on cooperation in non-traditional security issues, on implementation of the Htamanthi hydel power project and on boosting cultural exchange programmes between the two governments.

The Indian government is also keeping a close eye on the process of national reconciliation in accordance with the seven-step road map elaborated by the Myanmar government in August 2003. India is also undertak-

## Kalam makes students take five-point pledge

President A P J Abdul Kalam on Thursday administered a five-point pledge to 200-odd students in Singapore, urging them to have the courage to think differently, invent and make scientific discoveries.

Kalam, who wowed the youths of this island-nation with his power-point presentations often punctuated his speeches with witty remarks, gave the pledge while winding up an extempore lecture to students of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan International School here. The President's prescription to the students was to have courage to think differently, to invent, to discover, to compare the problems and succeed as also to work with courage for scientific discoveries.

When a student asked Kalam how he derived so much confidence, he said confidence has to be inspired in youths by their parents and teachers by not being pessimistic. Recalling his association with his mentor and leading space scientist Vikram Sarabhai, Kalam said parents and teachers should not rebuke children when they fail but goad them on to achieve success. Agencies

ing several cross-border projects with Myanmar in consonance with its "Look East" policy, apart from boosting military and trade ties. For instance, the 160-km Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo road link with Moreh in Manipur at the border has already been upgraded to boost connectivity between India's North-East and Myanmar.

Kalam pointed out that Myanmar was the only gateway to Asean for India. Furthermore, Myanmar and India are partners cooperating in BIMST-EC and the Mekong-Ganga cooperation. With an increase in trade, the two countries still have a prospect of further widening their scope of bilateral cooperation, he added.

As for his being a reluctant traveller, Kalam, who will also visit Mauritius in March, said: "I am connected. Sitting in Rashtrapati Bhavan, I am electronically connected. Moreover, I receive a tremendous number of visitors from all walks of life."

0 1 1 8 0 3

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Myanmar border gets new gates

**SOBHAPATI Samom**  
Imphal, January 20

AFTER THE January 8 twin blasts at Myanmar's Namphalong market, there are reports of heavy deployment of Myanmar troops, including bomb experts, along the Manipur sector of the Indo-Myanmar border.

Work is also going on in full swing to erect new border gates at Namphalong, a border commercial town flanking India's border town, Moreh. The Myanmar army reportedly asked the troops of 24 Assam Rifles and their commander that entry into Namphalong and Tamu towns from India should be allowed only through the existing Gate numbers 1 and 2. "If anyone is found entering Myanmar from any other gates than these two, the person will be arrested," informed the sources. The sources also stated that exit and entry inside Myanmar market during the night would also be prohibited.

Th Chothe, the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Moreh Town, has issued a notification in this regard. Ever since the border was sealed, inter-country border trade has been suspended. Thus, hundreds of petty traders have been hit hard.

Moreh resembles a desolate look as traders from northeastern region and mainland India who usually came to the town to buy goods from Myanmar markets have stopped coming. "However the formal business of export and import between the two countries have been start-



Ethnic minorities in traditional costumes plant jatropha crops in Lasho, Myanmar.

ed," Superintendent-in-charge of Customs, D. M. Das told the local media. "There is no restriction at the moment," he informed.

Meanwhile, on the eve of a proposed a protest rally against army excess, a serious charge of sodomy has been raised against the personnel of 24 Assam Rifles deployed at Moreh by a detainee N. Chao-ba, who alleged that he was made strip, dance and then sodomised by three Jawans of the paramilitary force at the latter's camp, reports a local daily.

washingtonpost.com

## Burma Disputes Report That Led to U.N. Action

Advertisement

By Glenn Kessler  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Wednesday, February 15, 2006; A17

→ Find out about our trial offer.

The U.N. Security Council's first-ever meeting in December to discuss the deteriorating situation in Burma was prompted in part by a comprehensive report in September calling for Security Council action that was commissioned by former Czech president Vaclav Havel and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu.

In-flight Internet from  
**connexion**  
by Boeing™

Now, an unusual document has been making the rounds of diplomats in Burma, attributed to an unnamed "group of academics" at Rangoon University, in an apparent attempt by the military government to provide a detailed response to the comprehensive report. In a mocking tone, the document repeatedly belittles or disputes issues that have seized international concern.

The 70-page Havel-Tutu report contended that the Burmese government poses a threat to peace and security in the region, in part because it relies on forced labor, widespread rape of ethnic women and government-sponsored drug trafficking to maintain control.

During the Dec. 16 Security Council session, Ibrahim Gambari, the U.N. undersecretary general for political affairs, privately told the Security Council that the Burmese people "have many of their essential rights and calls for democratic reform denied," and that there is no evidence the government is dealing with the emerging humanitarian crisis, according to a copy of his remarks.

The 23-page Burmese response asserted that the country, also known as Myanmar, is "one of a handful of countries facing unproven allegations" and "many well-informed analysts have been perplexed" by the United Nations' attention. It alleged that many of the figures concerning abuses in Burma are based on reports by dissidents and refugees who are not credible or seek to tarnish the country's image.

The document does not offer many detailed figures to counter the dissidents' reporting. The Burmese government "could be accused of lack of transparency but the government may have its own reasons for the lack of transparency," it said. "It is indeed unfair to make allegations by just basing them on one-sided accusations."

The Burmese document denied that more than 500,000 people had been driven from their homes through forced relocations, with many people forced to live on the fringes of society. It said that the problem was a "complex one" caused by insurgents and drug producers, and that the government is not to blame if people are hiding. The report asked: "How can the government provide access to health and education to those who are hiding in the jungle?"

The document also questioned predictions that surging HIV infections will increase, asking, "why could it not be lower?"

Jared M. Genser, an attorney at DLA Piper in Washington, which prepared the Havel-Tutu report, said the Burmese response was "a pretty transparent attempt on the part of the junta to try to distract from the enormous weight of international pressure it is feeling."

President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have taken a personal interest in Burma as part of the administration's democracy campaign. Aung San Suu Kyi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, was prevented by the Burmese military from taking office after her party won a landslide electoral victory the year before. She has been in detention for 10 of the past 16 years.

Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill told Congress last week that the administration is "considering next steps" to bring the Burma issue again before the Security Council.

© 2006 The Washington Post Company

**Advertising Links**

[What's this?](#)

**Luxury Hotels in Scotland**

Mackenzie Brock combines luxury accommodations with golf spa days, shopping, sightseeing and fine dining.  
[www.mbtours.co.uk](http://www.mbtours.co.uk)

**Luxury Link - Luxury Travel Hotels**

Save over 50% on luxury vacation packages. Exclusive rates and travel auctions.  
[www.luxurylink.com](http://www.luxurylink.com)

**Luxury Hotel Rates at BookingBuddy.com**

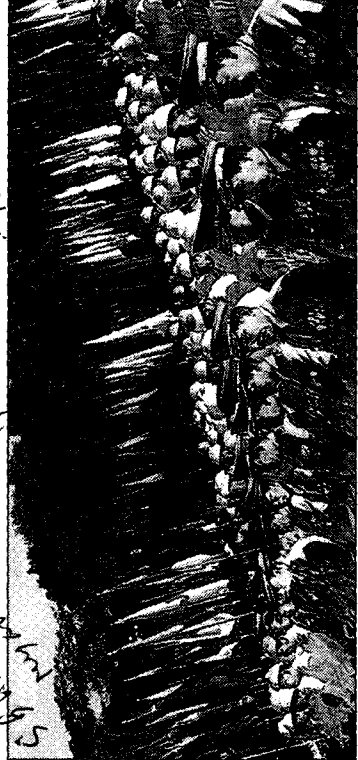
Compare luxury hotel rates from all major travel providers.  
[www.bookingbuddy.com](http://www.bookingbuddy.com)

# Myanmar celebrates I-Day, flays 'interference'

**Yangon (Myanmar):** Myanmar's military rulers celebrated the 56th anniversary of independence from Britain on Wednesday with a simple flag-hoisting ceremony and a message from the junta chairman accusing big nations of interfering in the affairs of other countries.

A bomb exploded in Bago, 80 km north of Yangon, on the eve of the celebrations but there were no reports of casualties and it was not known if the blast was related to event. "The blast occurred around 7 pm near a school. I heard the explosion but there were no casualties. Security is very tight today in Bago," a Bago resident said over the phone on Wednesday, insisting on anonymity for fear of reprisals.

"Nowadays, brazen annexation of a nation with the use of force is not as popular as before. However, it is found that some big nations are saying to interfere in the domestic



pressing mass pro-democracy protests. It held a general election in 1990, but refused to recognise the results after a landslide victory by the party of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for most of the last decade and a half.

Her National League for Democracy was to hold a separate ceremony at its Yangon headquarters later on Wednesday. The independence struggle was led by Suu Kyi's father Aung San.

Than Shwe's message was read out by Yangon area military commander Lieutenant General Myint Swe at a flag-raising ceremony in Yangon's People's Park attended by more than 10,000 people from the country's various ethnic groups, government agencies and NGOs.

Than Shwe said in his message that the government has laid down a seven-point roadmap that would lead to democracy. <sup>AP</sup>

## Independence Day celebrations in Myanmar on Wednesday

critic of the junta, for acting like a bully in international affairs.

After gaining independence from Britain, Myanmar experimented with democracy until 1962, when the military seized power to which it has since clung. The current junta emerged in 1988 after violently sup-

affairs of others and influence their political, economic, social and cultural traditions," said the message from junta leader Senior General Than Shwe.

No particular country was named, but Myanmar frequently criticises the United States, a strong