

Trends in Myanmar

Junta's fraud on the people reaffirmed

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The Myanmar military junta's threat to dissolve Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy is another desperate attempt to tighten the screws on an icon of the democratic movement in Asia. The charge that the NLD has links with illegal organisations is unlikely to convince the comity of nations. If the army has the evidence to back its contention, it ought to come upfront on so critical a matter. Short of that it is merely a pretext thought through with calculated malevolence, a sinister game to push through the junta's agenda. The army's position is now decidedly awkward following Suu Kyi's relentless boycott of the national constitution drafting convention, a sham if ever there was one. It's the junta that determines its composition and manner of functioning. Hence Suu Kyi's very real fear that her party is bound to be used as a rubber-stamp to confirm whatever the junta may decide. The NLD doesn't exist on the military's sufferance. It is a formidable party in its own right and Myanmar's politically-conscious populace can be spared such tosh that the government has been sufficiently tolerant and broad-minded to recognise the party as a legal political entity. It's been 16 years since the government's fraud was exposed. Despite Suu Kyi's landslide victory in the 1990 election, the military refused to hand over power. No good came of that famous victory; she has spent no less than a decade under house arrest.

The junta's fraud on the people has been reaffirmed with Wednesday's threat. Negotiations with the NLD have been ruled out on the fatuous claim that it has lost the trust of the people. The government still refuses to accede to the NLD's demand that parliament be convened with the members who were elected in 1990. With the constitution convention a non-starter, the establishment appears desperate to cover up its own incompetence, notably its failure to cope with such critical problems as bird flu and crippling inflation. The ruthless offensive against the ethnic minorities is only a symptom of that desperation to shore up its image. Any attempt to dissolve the NLD will further erode its credibility. Suu Kyi commands far greater respect than the ruling generals in Yangon.

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