

Naga Min Sitsinyay or "Operation Dragon King"

DOCUMENTATION

ROHINGYA REFUGEES

IN

WORLD PRESS

1978

Compiled

by

Shabbir Hussain

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

Mr. Abdul GAFFAR, B. A., B. T.,

&

Mr. Sultan AHMED, B. A., B. L.,

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

NOTE

The increasingly large number of patriotic people of Arakan (Arraccan) will welcome this compilation of documents of 1978 Rohingya Refugees appeared in different leading dailies/weeklies of the civilised world. The compiler deals with the value and importance of research and study or record on the History of Arakan (Roang) and Rohingya people and their legal identity. It is believed that the selected accounts/articles contained in this record book will contribute greatly to a general improvement of the true History of Arakan and its Nationals.

This historical record will be useful not only to the Rohingya people, both in and abroad, to adjust their growing doom future and look in time at their great problems ahead, but also to the general public to comment the Racism and Racial Discrimination against the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan by the successive Burmese Government is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is naked violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It represents the tragedy of aggression, brutality and barbarism when they oppress the weak and poor people. To live in Arakan as honourable citizen is our national rights!

If you want to know the truth & reality about the Muslim Community in Arakan (Burma) and her past history it is your most important duty to study it's relevant history. History plays an important role in serving one's religion, people and nation. Undoubtedly an impartial historian of the future will be able to record correctly in the pages of history that Rohingyas are bonafide citizens of Arakan country.

October 3, 1981.

Shahripur

**Dr. B. சீனிவாசன்** M.B.B.S., M.S (ORTHO.,)

Reg. No. 60175 Cell: 98424 56051

எலும்பு முறிவு, மூட்டு மாற்று, விபத்து மற்றும் முடந்தீக்கியல்  
அறுவை சிகிச்சை நிபுணர்

**Dr. B. Srinivasan** M.B.B.S., M.S (ORTHO.,)

Accident & Emergency Orthopaedic consultant

பார்வை நேரம் : திங்கள், செவ்வாய், வியாழன்  
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முன்பதிவு தொலைபேசி எண் :  
2432165, 2432166,  
2432167, 2431114.

பார்வை நேரம் : புதன், வெள்ளி, சனி  
மாலை மணி 6 To 8

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Name : Mohamed Fairzal Age/Sex. .... Date: 20.8.14

R

CERTIFICATE

This is to inform that  
Mr. Mohamed Fairzal S/o Samsudeen,  
16, Mohammed Ali Street, Shobapuram (PO),  
Kumbakonam, Thanjavur district, Tamilnadu,  
India - 612503 has been operated  
for fracture Bleg on 24.7.14.  
I have advised him rest. He needs  
parents support till he recovers  
completely.

**Dr. B. Srinivasan** M.B.B.S., M.S (ORTHO.,)  
Orthopaedic Consultant  
Reg. No. 60175



**அன்பு மெடிக்கல்ஸ்**

அன்பு மருத்துவமனை வளாகம்

4 & 5, லெக்ஷ்மி விலாஸ் தெரு, கும்பகோணம் - 612001.

☎ 2432165, 2432166, 2432167, 2431114 Cell No. 98424 40909, 93456 99322

Fax : 0435 - 2432266, E-Mail : anbuhospitalkumbakonam@yahoo.co.in

website : www.anbuhospital.org

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To  
THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT  
of  
**THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF THE  
UNION OF BURMA**

ROHINGYA PATRIOTIC FRONT  
ARAKAN ( BURMA )

*To*  
The People And The Government  
*Of*  
The Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma

We have ample cogent reasons to believe that the government and the general public all over the country are fully in the know of our just struggle for the last three and a half decades. It needs no reiteration herein because of the reason that we have already expressed ourselves in our Historic Document of October 1976, titled: 'ROHINGYAS' OUTCRY & DEMANDS'. It was scribbled and published under adverse circumstances principally with the hope that it might serve the government as an eye-opener in respect of the Muslim minority affairs in Burma and particularly those relating to the Rohingyas of Arakan who have long been made target of GENOCIDE AND APARTHEID in every field of life and activities.

But alas! as ill-luck would have it, the Union government functionaries, in collaboration with the racists of the Arakan State authorities and the unscrupulous big guns of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) have rather unleashed fresh campaigns of hatred and anachronistic terror against the Rohingyas; and in the wake of their diabolic atrocities other patriotic citizens in Arakan are also not spared.



( 2 )

The task and principles for a democratic socialist state have been belied by the present dictatorial and racist policy of the regime of General Ne Win who will surely be not paid off by his wild practice of gambling in politics. Since the assumption of power by him and the introduction of what is called the "Burmese way to Socialism" the country has been rapidly deteriorating in political, economical, social and cultural conditions. But he is still dragging on with active support of his henchmen and lackeys. This multi-national dreamy land of 34 million of people and thousands of pagodas, mosques and churches is in fact now on the verge of debacle.

General No Win also the absentee socialist dictator with his sceptre and crown, is destined to be shortly tumbled down. The world then shall see the fate of his Bayonet Socialism. The outside world is yet unaware of the actual internacine feuds and hollowness in his to-pheavy and flamboyant administration as no information can trickle down beyond the frontiers due to the influence of the imposition of xenophobia.

In Arakan, exploitation, inequality, repression, racial discrimination, heinous atrocities, diabolism and oppression amidst numerous other wrongs and injustices, in many covert and overt forms, are long being carried out specially against the Rohingyas and their sympathisers.

Arakan is admittedly a Muslim majority region which is geographically, climatically, historically, ethnologically and culturally separated from the rest of Burma; and ever since the beginning of the 6th century A. D. It

has been the permanent abode of the Hinayana Buddhist (Maghs) and Muslims (Rohingyas) who have been co-existing over there with perfect amity, of course, with certain very brief intervening periods of communal disturbances flamed and headed by some fanatics most of whom to-day are accessories to General Ne Win.

These anti-Muslim elements both inside and outside the government offices at the centre are determined to fulfil their premeditated designs of assimilating the Arakanese Buddhists and completely exterminating the Muslims. Their foremost objective is to annihilate the Muslims in the first instance. Therefore, it presupposes that after the total annihilation of the Rohingyas they will pay full attention to the assimilation of the Maghs. Arakan may thus one day be transformed into an ultra-ethnic area.

We want peace and peaceful co-existence with dignity, honour, security of life and property, as true citizens of Burma. But the present government has invariably been branding us as aliens contrary to the letter and spirit of the U. N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In context to the numerical strength, at page 2 of the said document 'Rohingyas' Outcry & Demands' there is a categorical assertion of our Rohingya people being in majority in Arakan, but ere we could avail of any propitious opportunity of cutting the 'Gordian Knot' the militarist ruling junta has deliberately and maliciously started insidious, mendacious, prejudicial and vicious propaganda against us alleging that we are not to be considered as Burmese citizens purely because of the fact

that we are not Buddhists but Muslims and consequently aliens. The popular cry of the nationalist Buddhists is that 'to be a Burman is to be a Buddhist'. It is, therefore, quite obvious that the anti-Muslim Burmese people will not be at rest so long as the Rohingyas are not exterminated to the last man.

To nip in the bud all our just struggle the unscrupulous racist government has set against the Rohingyas hundreds of Immigration officials assisted by heavy armed forces under the command of Col. Min Goung, Commander, Western Command, Akyab. This operation is scheduled to be continued and carried all over Arakan with the dirty intention of eliminating the Rohingyas.

It makes no secret of the fact that the government has already taken a decision to conduct the general census of population in the country during the current year, after craftily completing the work of disqualifying the Muslims from their right of citizenship, in as many numbers as possible so that the government might not lose the chance of forestalling the emergence of the truth regarding the actual strength of Muslims prior to the general census of operation.

There were already several Immigration Operations of different categories over the last few years. One of them is known as the 'SABE OPERATION'. During those operation periods tens of thousands of Rohingyas' National Registration Cards (NRCs) were seized without any legal authority, on various pretexts which were never returned. In fantastic and ridiculous ways thousands and thousands of the poor and natural born Rohingyas

were classified as foreigners, alleging to have infiltrated from Bangladesh, with ulterior motives of perishing them by hook or crook or in the alternative to push them out en masse across the border.

However, for the present, let us be frank and bold enough to declare with all impunity at our command that we are not those who try to brand all with the same brush. We look at things from the point of view of reality. We have to tell the government and the world community the bare truth. This government in the name of Socialist Rule has simply been perpetrating a unique sort of dictatorship in Burma flagrantly contradictory to all the Norms of International Law, Conventions, bilateral or multilateral treaties, etc.

Like the previous operation (Sabc) the government started another operation of a severe nature known as the 'NAGA MIN OPERATION'\* with effect from the 1st week of February 1978, beginning from Akyab, the Headquarters of the Arakan State, Burma.

As it has been indicated earlier, the government functionaries in their well-planned way, by the middle of the last month, on fake and imaginary charges, under sections 6 (2) of the Immigration Act, 13 (1) of the National Registration Act and 5 (1) of the Foreigners' Registration Act, have indiscriminately rounded up and unlawfully detained 5675 bonafide Rohingya citizens, including old men, women, girls, boys and children from scores of households, of Akyab town, who have authentic evidences of their time-honoured settlements in the area.

\* Naga Min means King Dragon

The ruthless Immigration Operation parties usually cordone Rohingya villages and quarters at dawn ( the time of prayer for Muslims ) and forcibly enter into the dwelling houses. Then after terrifying the inmates search and drag them to CONCENTRATION CAMPS on various pleas. The usual plea is that they are required for interrogations by Immigration officers. These brutal and vanomous personnel do not have even the good sense of politely treating the 'Purdanashin' females and prestigious old People. The arrested persons are confined in unspacious places where there are no facilities for taking rest and food. Those who are taken to the Central Agricultural Godowns at 4th Mile, Akyab and the Cantonment are very often molested, manhandled, whipped and even raped to death. Many of them also suffer death due to starvation as neither the government makes any arrangement for supplying food to them nor their nearest and dearest ones are allowed to provide them with any provisions of food. In many cases, their relations and symphathisers who go to meet them are chased with guns and mercilessly beaten up.

On the pretext of making separate interrogations males, females and youngsters are separated in groups from their respective families and then carried away to unknown destinations. In course of their removal from place to place some even expire due to fatigue, ill-treatment and starvation. Particularly, young women are picked up and carried away for unholy purpose on the pretext of making interrogation. Some such women could not yet be traced. It is feared that they have been raped and killed. Being unable to withstand various kinds of tortures some pregnant women suffered abortion and others are still languishing in illegal confinement.

On February 17, 1978 about 400 women from the Central Agricultural Godown Detention Camp (Akyab), with several babies in their feeble arms, were removed to the central jail but there being no additional accommodation for these arrested females they were taken back, jammed in trucks like cordwoods without floor space to sit down. Oh God! how horrible was that heart-rendering phenomenal scene in this sophisticated age! The bewilderment, lamentation and wailing of those miserable Rohingya (specially the females and children) were rending even the heaven. However, some innocent Rohingyas of the area who naturally got provoked became vocal. Though they peacefully protested against the ill-treatment, yet there ensued an uproar, whereafter the beastly escort opened fire on them killing 4 of the persons at the spot. A number of them were also seriously injured and when they were taken to the Civil Hospital, Akyab the medical authorities refused to admit them for treatment even on humanitarian ground. Subsequently, some of the injured persons succumbed to the injuries of indiscriminate gun shot. In this connection several local elders and students were also wantonly and arbitrarily arrested and carried away to some unknown destinations. So far the authorities have sentenced half of the persons after mockery of trials under the said Immigration Act or so.

In the wake of this barbaric operation, at midnight on Feb. 18, 1978, the Army authorities swooped down on Kawardail, Akyab and arrested among others a prestigious religious person of the village on the fictitious allegation of inciting the afore-described protesters. He was called Mov. Abdul Munaf (40). On arrest he was

extremely tortured by kicking, trampling and beating with rifle butts. The torturers even plucked and burnt his beard. As a result he succumbed to the injuries after a few days.

But even after blazing a trail for perpetrating barbarism against the helpless and peace-loving Rohingya citizens, merely out of racial hatred and fanaticism, one Maj. Kyaw Maung (Saw Mraa Aung), son-in-law of Kyaw Mra Chowdhury of Teknaf, Cox's Bazar Sub-division, Chittagong, Bangladesh, now Chairman of the Arakan State concurrently a Central Committee member of Burma Socialist Programme Party had the fullhardiness to openly, ~~consciously and quantly~~ declare at Akyab in this connection that "whatever is now being done by the Immigration Operation authorities is not based on religious grounds".

Are these act of genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempt to commit genocide and complicity in genocide, not crimes against humanity and such triable either by the Union Government itself or the International penal Court? Certainly, everyone who commit such odious crimes should be heavily penalised and if otherwise the incrimination of the crime of genocide will undoubtedly be absolutely meaningless.

It now, therefore, lies with the government to bring to book all these perpetrators of various crimes committed against the Rohingyas. If not, from all view points, this government of General Ne Win shall eventually be responsible and bear the consequences therefor. It is, by

now, highly imperative that, he as the supreme head of the Union Government, should analytically take stock of the prevailing conditions in Arakan by physically presenting himself at the troubled spots, accompanied by IMPARTIAL and independent Muslim leaders both from Arakan and the rest of Burma. If such a DEMAND of we the oppressed people is not promptly fulfilled we will naturally be taking that "he who does evil and he who condones it— both must share the guilt".

All our appeals in the past fell on deaf ears. Since we have also the birth right of existing on our own soil as human beings, with full dignity and honour, we were lastly constrained to make heard our OUTCRY to the World Bodies for immediate redress. Try to see us through the vista of our phenomenal historical background and then sagaciously judge as to how the BSPP and the government agencies are legally and morally justified in branding the Arakanese Muslims (Rohingyas) as Bangladeshi Nationals without any foundation. Like the Arakanese Buddhists (Maghs) our settlement in Arakan is also centuries-old.

We the Rohingyas are nothing else but true Burmese Nationals by birth, like other minority nationals most of whom settled in Burma much later than we the two sister communities of Arakan. To our knowledge there are only a handful of Bangladeshi Nationals in Arakan. So, in the face of such stark realities based on incontrovertible historical facts and official records why should we the sons of the soil, in lakhs are thus being shamelessly, inhumanly and illegally attempted to be wiped



off under fake and vague allegations of being Bangladeshi Nationals.

It is, however, clear to everyone as to why the Immigration Authorities, under threat, coercion, duress and devious means, are compelling our fellow Rohingyas to declare in the Remark Columns of their prescribed Registration Forms, stating that they are Bangladeshi Nationals. Neither in the past 35 years nor even by now our Burmese Government took up with either Pakistan or Bangladesh this malicious and vexatious political stunt. Lakhs of us who have already fled the country to escape persecution or are forcibly pushed across the Burma-Bangladesh border are now regarded as a heavy burden on the over-stretched economy of Bangladesh. The rest of our refugees are regarded as hazardous elements in different other countries they left for.

The policy of Divide & Rule practiced during the British colonial period clearly appears to have long been followed by our government too. The sowing of the seeds of enmity between our two communities in Arakan is still going on unabated. How long can we and the intelligent world can be hoodwinked? Many of the Maghs who are still inprudent and insolent do not seem to have understood how their community is being clandestinely Burmanized. The infusion of the poison of hating and bulling us has yet kept them in illusion. They will perhaps never be disillusioned unless they themselves understand with sobriety that they radically differ from the Burmans traditionally, historically, ethnologically and geographically. Was not Arakan an independent country

till 1784 A. D. ? Surely it was. The independent characteristics of we the people of Arakan ever remained unchanged. Our spirit of nationalism has been dormant but smouldering during the last 194 years, like anthracite. The indomitable traits of character in our heroic people cannot thus be marred, sapped, ruined and polluted by assimilative pressure, verdicts of death sentences, purging of pragmatists, imprisonment, allurements, incitement of communalism, subjugation, chauvinism or even by apartheid and genocide. Branding us as aliens, traitors, saboteurs, autonomists and even separatists will not budge us an inch from our unswerving struggle for equal rights and freedoms.

The power of the government lies with the people. Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. The voice of the people is the voice of God. So, if this government also persists in playing the dirty British colonial game of inciting one community or group against the other or oppresses its subjects like an autocrat or an absolute dictator its debacle is inevitable. Aggression, repression, extermination, vandalism, barbarism, sham-patriotism and self-imposed pseudo-socialism have now become out-fashioned, obnoxious and detestable. We are in Apollo age and the world now wants true democracy irrespective of colour and creed.

We the Muslims of Burma are an integral part of the nation. Those suffering oppression and racial discrimination, specially in Arakan, are indeed of militant characteristic though under various disadvantages. As in the remote past, we have always been patriotic. As

such we had the notion that the government would harness the potentialities of our man-power for the development of this sparsely populated and backward region. We thought of being really helpful to the government in strengthening its hand in rapidly developing the shattered economy of our motherland and as well boldly guarding our vulnerable northwest and southwest frontiers. Traditionally, Rohingyas are dedicated soldiers highly capable of safeguarding the country's integrity, solidarity and sovereignty. Why then should we be made target of oppression and repression merely on racial and religious ground? Is it a crime in Burma to be a Muslim and not a Buddhist? Most of the sovereign state in the world to-day are multi-national. As for example in China, India and Indonesia there are scores of minority nationalities who are coexisting with peace, honour and dignity. But it is in Burma alone where the most potential Muslim minority community of actually about 4 million, out of a total population of 34 million, are not tolerated.

Prior to the closing of the Second World War there were 8 million Muslims in Burma out of which 4 million or so who were aliens have already left the country long ago. [The Rohingyas of Arakan are 1.5 million or even more, but 1/3 of them have been knowingly rendered landless, homeless and then barbarously killed or driven out of the country.]

The Ruling Clique composed of ill-motivated autocrats and bureaucrats do not as yet seem to have understood that history takes its own course like the oceanic currents. Let there be no mistaking the fact that we are

the descendants of those Muslims whose supremacy was once felt even in distant climes with great admiration. History will surely repeat itself. We shall rise up again and face the oppressors with greater courage. History is made by the people and in the course of making history people will invariably bring forth their own leaders. All the conspiratorial activities of the racist regime will be resisted with determination and fortitude.

In the end, the perverse actions of all our oppressors and reactionaries will prove to be boomerangs. We firmly believe that our people will frustrate all enemy schemes and plots so long as they maintain sharp vigilance, persist in struggle and strengthen their unity. God will surely help us in our just struggle for the restoration of our usurped rights and freedoms. The world is fast advancing amidst turmoil, and the people are awakening in the course of struggle. Countries want independence, nation wants liberation and so we as well want emancipation through revolution. The sinister intention of the government to enslave us and liquidate our entity as citizens of Burma has been seen through by our conscientious countrymen and the international community.

We have actually been compelled to enter into this struggle against the racial, economical and political discriminations. The freedom objective of our Rohingya people will not only directly benefit us but definitely serve the interest of others in Arakan and the rest of Burma. During the past three and a half decades our younger generation, specially those of Rohingya people, have gained wide range of experience in the matter of building

organization, cultivating unity, reaching out to forge alliances with the wide strata of the rest of the people of Burma. They have, out of their experience grown profoundly critical of the whole nature and structure of the Burmese society.

The special racist character of socio-economic and politicocultural exploitation of the Muslims (more so of the Rohingyas) of Burma by monopoly is disclosed in the real fact that the Muslims are deprived from every category of employment. As we the Muslims have been ruthlessly exploited and robbed of our rightful Share in the economy so have we been deprived of our just share of social services, educational and cultural opportunities. Prejudicial and racist laws, discriminatory customs and extreme poverty due to either unemployment or under-employed, have conspired to force the mass of the Muslims die in starvation in most areas or, in the alternative, either become servitors to Burmese Buddhist household or except servitude under them.

The greatest indictment against the social system of the Burmese monopolists is revealed also in the fact that we the Muslims have been deprived of our minimal political rights associated with constitutional guarantee of citizens and the basic criticism of socialist democracy and human rights. In Arakan-nay, in the whole of the country, even the elementary right to vote is also a cause to struggle for and not yet a universally won and exercised right of the people in Burma.

In the whole of the country, Lower and Upper, we the Muslims, specially the Rohingyas of Arakan, are

deprived of our rightful political power, of fair representation in government from the local to the national levels. We also are confronted on every hand with the ideological assaults upon our human dignity and self-esteem by the barbarous doctrine and practices of Buddhists preponderance and supremacy, of racist prejudice and chauvinist arrogance.

The Immigration Operations are in fact nothing but simply a cover up to extirpate Rohingyas from Arakan. What is now being done by the government in the name of Immigration Operation speaks a volume of the harrowing tales about the cruel persecution of the Rohingyas. Complaints made to high ups are dismissed as hallucinations and shadowboxing. House to house search, sweeping arrests, molestations duress, barbaric treatment, rape, death due to starvation, diseases, non-supply of food stuff, poisoning of foods and non availability of medicine in detention camps and jails during operation periods and thereafter, have become regular features. Where then lies the remedy against such heinous atrocities? Let the people of our country also patiently and independently judge as to whether the government is justified in conniving at and condoning the acts of genocide and apartheid in Arakan.

So far, about 600 ancient Rohingyas settlements have been completely destroyed and on the usurped lands outside Buddhists, with even foreign nationalities, are being regularly settled. The irony of fate is that, in spite of identifying those immigrants of recent years as foreigners, we the Rohingyas with such an ethnic origin, are so fantastically and deliberately being branded as

immigrants from Bangladesh.  
We know it full well that the path of revolution is no smooth sailing. Ours is a democratic revolution. We shall spare no pains and fear not any devil in marching along the most difficult and tortuous path in reaching our destination— may it take us any number of years, for our entire community and as well as all the peace-loving and consciencious sister communities in our country, are wholeheartedly with us. We are ready to face any eventualities. Every policy of malacious and brutal cruelty will be resisted with vehemence. The government is well-advised to degist from all **NAKED AND NAZI-LIKE POLICIES OF ROHINGYA EXTERMINATION.** We are now actually confronting a cold-war which has to be immediately stopped by the government lest it might not turn into a hot-war engulfing even our surrounding neighbours and put the Bay in flames. We cannot be deterrred from pointing out the stark reality and giving out the truth that the tyrant government of General Ne Win and his predicessors have systematically robbed us of our basic rights and freedoms, lands; liberty and peace associated with the principles of so-called Socialist Democracy said to be practised by the Rangoon regime. In context to the Immigration Operations we have to proclaim further before the civilized world that there are numerous instances of atrocious heaped and engineered by the government in Arakan, where there is not a single family that has not suffered at the hands of the oppressors or lost some one. The breathtakingly phenomenal scene at the time of cordoning and raiding the Rohingya quarters, villages and settlements by the brutal army and police personnel boggars description. Terrified by their

tyrinnical action thousands of Rohingya people have been abandoning their hearths and homes intending to cross over the border to Bangladesh en masse.

Law has become one sided affair in Arakan. Come what may I We have taken a blood-vow to still for ever all the heinous activities against the Muslims. We Muslims are no doubt helpless but He will help us I

How can there be any socialist democracy in the country unless its peoples are guaranteed such essential rights as security of life and property and unless all forms of discrimination based on race, nationality, language, religion and social status are totally abolished ?

So, if General Ne Win really claims to be a true Socialist Leader and Ruler, we believe, he will not hesitate to prove himself to be so, for a man is better known by his deeds than his mere bragging. His administrators have made a mess of the whole administration not only in Arakan but also in the whole of the country culminating in chaos everywhere.

Where there had been aggression and oppression there was resistance. We shall also be ever ready to pay any price for our safety from the tyranny at the hands of the government and shall, by His grace, resolutely and unitedly resist with our traditional spirit and mettle, any conspiracy against us and our compatriots. The foolish notion of a group of the Maghs in Arakan who are secretly settling their co-religionists from alien countries on Rohingya's lands and are also contemplating to convert the Rohingyas into hewers of woods and



carries of water will be properly taught as to how their compatriots are to be respected. The pristine culture and heritage of a heroic co-ethnic race can not be obliterated at others, instigation and instrumentally.

We have been involved in a real revolution - a revolution for immediate and full restoration of all our usurped Democratic Rights. Even after restoring all our basic rights and freedoms if the government fails to give us citizens' duties there will yet remain a struggle for the future which might again stain the region with our people's blood.

80% of our population is suffering from hunger, various diseases and malnutrition, more than 99% of us are unemployed or underemployed and tens of thousands are illiterate. Nevertheless, Muslims are yet tremendously contributing to the country's economy but in all spheres we are constantly and hopelessly been deprived of the consequential benefits thereof. The crippled economy of the country, boosted by foreign aids and loans, have been geared only to the top heavy administration and defence budgets resulting inflation and worsening crises; and these have brought about increasing misery specially for the Muslims of the country.

The Authorities at Rangoon are blindly working only on exaggerated, evasively prepared and extensively fabricated reports and fake news from Arakan. The action of General Ne Win's military government, particularly in Arakan, have been entirely unjustified and have constituted a breach of regional peace, a threat to

the maintenance of peace and a constitution of aggression which calls for an immediate redress.

General Ne Win and his multifarious and hydra-headed aids seem to be exceptionally tough nuts to crack but they must. It is imperative that they and their accessories now act quickly and with a full vigour to find the perpetrators of these heinous deeds and adequately punish them. Every decent citizen in the land, and more so in Arakan, is sick to death of these acts of terrorism which have got to be stopped as HUMANITY HAS GONE AMOK in Arakan.

Therefore, in context to this barbarous Naga Min Operation, the **Rohingya Patriotic Front** calls for :

1. **Immediate Abandonment of the TRICKY IMMIGRATION OPERATION, in the country that are being extensively carried on detrimental to the interest of the Rohingya population ;**
2. **Unconditional Ending of arbitrary arrests, illegal confinement, manhandling, humiliation, rape, torture, killings, miscarriage of justice, movement restriction within the country, mass annihilation, establishment of settlements of Buddhists on Rohingya lands and racial discrimination of all forms ;**
3. **Maintaining peace and order by immediately establishing Rule and Law in Arakan ;**
4. **Calling back forthwith the Army and Police Forces from Muslim areas with strict directives not to**

indulge anymore in any act of violence against the Rohingyas in and out of Arakan, and also to adopt effective measures to safeguard their life, property, honour and dignity ;

5. Unreservedly Releasing all Rohingyas illegally detained either in concentration camps and jails or imprisoned as foreigners even from before ;
6. Judicially Withdrawing all pending cases in Law Courts against the Rohingyas under the Immigration, Citizenship and Foreigners Registration Acts and rehabilitate them suitably ;

May the Almighty Creator help us in our Just Struggle against exploitation and tyranny ;

With our message of good-will and best wishes to our sister community in Arakan and the people of Burma across the Arakan Yoma,

Dated—February 20, 1978.

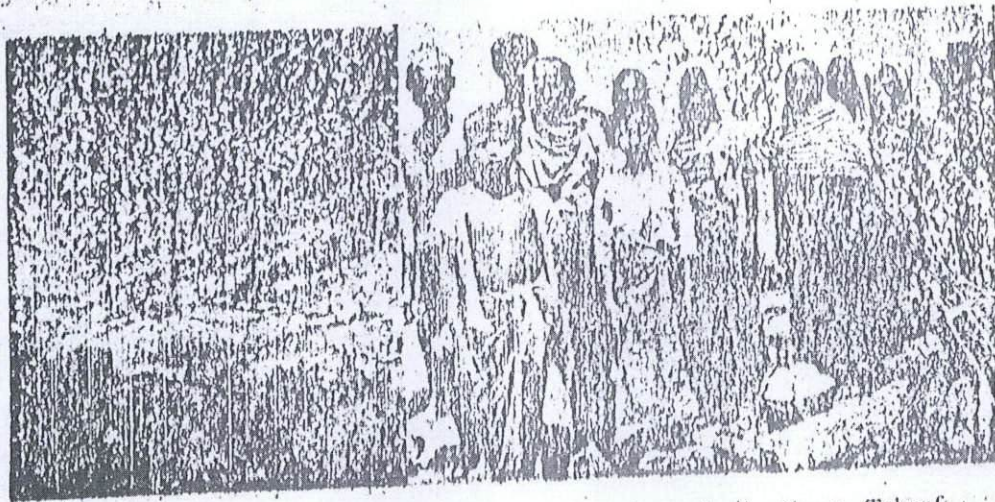
ROHINGYA PATRIOTIC FRONT  
ARAKAN (BURMA).

The numerous heinous atrocities by the operation authorities are being continuously carried out in rest of the areas to the west of the Kaladan river in respect whereof we shall acquaint the outside world as well hereafter.

## An appeal to the World Community to save the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan, Burma from extermination and annihilation

A large number of Burmese nationals entered into Bangladesh in the last week of March '78 from our neighbouring country, Burma. The refugees are the members of the ethnic, religious and lingual minorities of Burma known as Rohingya Muslims. The influx of this section of People into Bangladesh is not a new event. They have been frequently migrating to Bangladesh since Japanese occupation of Burma during second world war. It was accelerated by the Communal riot of 1942. The situation remained unchanged in post independence days of Burma due to chauvinistic attitude of almost all of the Governments toward this section of people.

Different repressive measures taken by the Burmese Govts. bear testimony to this attitude. Sometimes these measures are enhanced causing mass exodus apart from regular influx of them in to Bangladesh is small numbers. The large scale extermination campaigns such as the campaigns of 1955, 1959-60 and 1975 clearly indicate that the main motive of the Burmese Govts. is to completely depopulate the age-old Rohingyas from the soil of Arakan. As a result, about 4 lakhs of Rohingyas have already come over to Bangladesh and a good number of them have travelled upto Pakistan and Middle East in search of shelter.



(Left) A victim of torture, (Right) A refugee family at Ledha Camp, Teknaf.

But the extermination campaign known as "Naga-mu" or 'operation Dragon' launched in early February '78 surpassed all previous records. It is learnt from the refugees' coming in the wake of this campaign that one lakh 50 thousand Rohingyas were rendered homeless in Buthidong and 15 thousands of them were expelled from Akyab. About 5 thousands men and women were rounded up and put to concentration camp. They reported that five hundred young women were sorted out to be housed in the fertilizer godowns on the out skirts of Buthidong and army personnels were said to be visiting this particular camp with unholy motive. Besides, rape, arson, physical torture were frequent during the campaign. Being driven out of their localities the unfortunate Rohingyas took shelter in jungles of Mondhu area and 50 thousand of them crossed 16 miles long hilly areas with great hardship to reach the eastern bank of the river Naaf and began to pour in Bangladesh. In the first phase about 10 thousand of them crossed the border. Our border forces herded them in to two groups one at Ledha and another at Dhamdomia of Huilla under Teknaf, Chittagong.

Some members of our organization visited these camps and found that the brutality unleashed on them by the Burmese govt. is in no way less brutal than these of Nazism. Many of the refugees did not know where abouts of the members of their families. Some of them are said to have lost their lives in torture, capsizing of boats while crossing the river and out of fatigue of long journey. Not to speak of the members of the public, we saw even the B.D.R. on duty shed tears hearing their sad plights though they had to push them back beyond the border to meet unknown fate brandishing sticks and sometimes landing

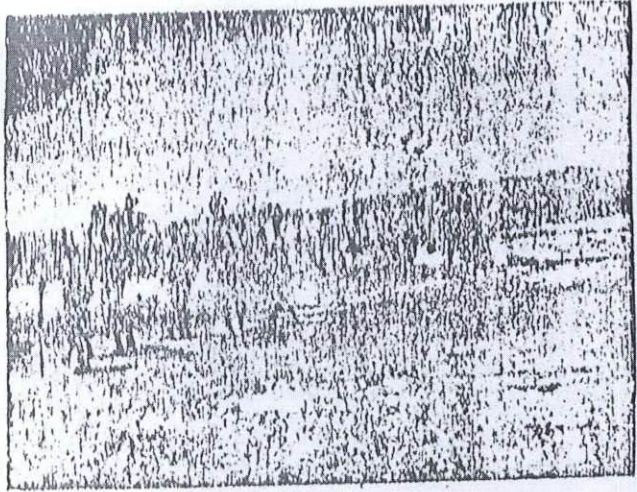
them on the persons of these hungry and weary destitutes under order from 'above'. Despite our vigilance along border the influx of refugees could not be stopped as, on the other hand, the Burmese authority put up similar measures to keep them away from their homes. The refugees apprehended that they would either be killed or put to jail as they had already been declared non-citizen of Burma.

About five thousand refugees have already mingled with our population and about 40 thousands are staying on the other side of the river, reported the refugees.

The world is completely in dark about what happened in Burma. The extermination policy of Burma against 15 lakhs of Rohingya poses as a great problem for us also. We, at Cox's Bazar, have formed a forum named "Committee in aid of Ethnic and Religious minorities (Rohingya Muslims) of Burma to bring this problem to the notice of world Community so that the Rohingya Muslims can regain their full right of Citizenship through interference, pressure, persuasion and with help of the appropriate agencies.

Cox's Bazar Bar Association and Cox's Bazarsamity of Dacca and Chittagong have adopted separate resolutions urging our Govt. to prevail upon the Government of Burma to ensure peace and security of the Rohingya Muslims.

We firmly believe that the people of Bangladesh who have always lent their support to the oppressed people of the world will not keep silent at the oppressions being meted out to the Rohingyas by the Burmese Govt. The Rohingya Muslims like other national minorities of Burma as well as those of other countries can genuinely demand all privileges and rights to live in their home land. Unless this problem is solved this sort of influx will assume alarming proportion and upset the economic and social life of Cox's Bazar may Bangladesh.



A group of uprooted Rohingya Muslims Crossing the border to find a Shelter in Bangladesh.

Committee in aid of Burmese Rohingya  
Muslims (Refugee), Cox's Bazar

Extract of the proceeding of the emergent meeting of Cox's Bazar Bar Association held on 3/4/1978.

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We observe with deep concern that a large number of Burmese nationals (Ethnic and religious minorities) have recently infiltrated into the territory of Bangladesh through different points of Bangladesh-Burma border. A great number of them have been pushed back to Burma by our Government and the rest have mingled with our populace avoiding vigilance of the border forces.

The causes of their exodus from their home land are said to be different kinds of repressive measures meted out to them. Stories of rape, arson, looting and murder are pouring in. It appears that those who have been pushed back will meet unknown fate. It is further known that about 50,000 uprooted people are staying along the bordering area being barred by the Burmese Govt. from going back to their home and hearth and they will be continuously coming to Bangladesh in small number if not in large numbers.

It may be mentioned here that such exodus of Burmese nationals have been taking place from time to time. In 1975 there was a large scale influx of the same section of people to Bangladesh and it is apprehended that this sort of situation, will occur in future too, in more aggravated form.

Such kind of influx of foreign population will upset the economic and social life of our area. We note with alarm that peace, tranquility and the time old communal harmony of the bordering area will be affected. Further, it may create a rift in the friend relationship enjoyed by Bangladesh and Burma.

In view of the above facts, we urge upon the Govt. to take up the matter with the Govt. of Burma and find a permanent solution to ethnic minorities of Burma can live in their homeland with honour, prestige and full right of citizenship and that the bordering area of the countries is not disturbed in this way in future.

Resolved that the copy of this resolution be sent to the Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, Press and the Convenor, Committee in aid of oppressed ethnic minorities (Muslim) of Burma, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

SI/-  
J. Chakraborti,  
President,  
Cox's Bazar Bar Association,  
Cox's Bazar.

GENOCIDE IN BURMA  
AGAINST  
THE MUSLIMS OF ARAKAN



ROHINGYA PATRIOTIC FRONT  
ARAKAN (Burma)

2.51.

## GENOCIDE IN BURMA AGAINST THE MUSLIMS OF ARAKAN

### INTRODUCTION:

The Muslims of Arakan in Burma known as Rohingyas have long been exterminated by the racist Burmese Government and the nationalist Magh Buddhists. Rohingyas are the descendents of the Muslim Arabs, Moors, Persians, Moguls and Bengalis. The Arab traders themselves arrived and introduced Islam in Arakan in the 7th century A.D. The ethnic origin of Rohingyas is traced as far back as the later part of 7th century A.D., that is, long long before many of the other minority indigenous races (such as Shans, Chins, Kachins, Karens, Mons etc.) entered Burma.

Having been inhumanly oppressed and repressed beyond all descriptions, flagrantly contrary to all norms of International law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by the Ruling Junta of the Burmese Government, in collaboration with anti-Muslim elements of Arakan, we the indigenous Rohingyas of the region have eventually been forced to appeal and beseech to the world community to **SAVE THE ROHINGYA MUSLIMS OF ARAKAN IN BURMA FROM EXTERMINATION AND ANNIHILATION** from our rightful motherland where we have been established well over a thousand years. We further appeal before World Bodies to take immediate steps for the restoration of our **FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AS BONAFIDE CITIZENS OF BURMA.**

As long as a single Rohingya Muslim lives on earth, the world can never forget that in 1942, when the British Government evacuated from Burma and the Japanese did not occupy yet, the Magh Buddhists equipped with fire arms obtained from the British, plundered the Muslim villages and massacred nearly 1,00,000 Muslims in Arakan. Thousands of



men, women and children were burnt alive by locking them up in bamboo houses, and depopulated more than 500,000 Muslims from hundreds of villages. This was beginning of the present day on-going genocide against the Muslims in Arakan. The extermination campaign are continuing unabated with the result that thousands of Rohingyas migrated to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Middle East countries.

### THE NAGAMIN OPERATION :

A true account of the day by day development of the on-going genocide against the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan, Burma under the brutal dictatorship of General Ne Win and the chauvinist Magh Buddhists is described in the following pages.

The causes of the genocide are briefly explained in the appendix on page 8.

The on-going extermination operation of a very severe nature known as the NAGAMIN (Dragon Operation) has been launched in Arakan in order to annihilate the remaining Muslim population of the region. This merciless atrocious operation has been going on since February, 1978 under special supervision of Deputy Home Minister U Khin Maung Ti directed by the Facist Government of General Ne Win.

On the day of Feb. 6, 1978 a number of 250 well armed Immigration officials arrived at Akyab from Rangoon. They started the Dragon Operation at Akyab Town and its suburban area on the 11th Feb., 78 with the active collaboration of a large number of heavily armed forces from Burma Army, Burma Navy and Police department together with the members from civil administration department and the Magh members of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). During the course of raid they encircled and blocked the Muslim Quarters and villages at dawn (the prayer time for Muslims) and made house to house searches. They started harrasing and arresting lots of innocent Rohingyas under the false and wanton allegations that they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. So far over 5000 Rohingyas (men, women, oldmen, children and pregnant women) were arrested. They were kicked, beaten and persecuted. Finally, they were taken away to the concentration camps. The condition of these concentration camps are considered worse than solitary confinement. None of them are supplied adequate food and other necessities of life. No relative and friends are allowed to visit them. Many of them are dying of hunger, malnutrition and lack of medical care.

On 17th Feb., 78 about 400 women herded like animals in the army trucks were taken to and fro between concentration camps and the Akyab Central Jail. The beastly Immigration officials and the police constables were so rough and merciless in treating with the women folk that thousands of Rohingyas of the areas naturally got provoked and turned

out for a demonstration calling for the immediate release of the innocent Rohingyas and stoppage of the Dragon Operation. But the police and army opened indiscriminate gun firing at the demonstrators killing 4 of the peaceful demonstrators and injuring others seriously. Subsequently, the police and the army arrested many Muslim prominent persons and the students on the suspicion of being the instigators of the demonstration. Some of them were killed due to brutal beating. Among those who were arrested is a very famous Muslim preacher namely Maulana Abdul Monaf of Kawardail (Amkari village tracts), Akyab. He was arrested at midnight from his home and was tortured inhumanly. He was beaten by gun butts, his beard were plucked and burned as a result of which he succumbed to death due to his injuries on Feb. 27.

On 18th Feb., 78 the mobile court had imprisoned over two thousand Rohingyas in jails under so-called Immigration Act 6 (2); National Registration Act 13 (1); and Foreigners Registration Act 5 (1). They are still in the concentration camps. There are many instances where parents are considered to be the citizens of Burma, but their children are condemned to be aliens. Something so puzzling to simple common sense. This is the way how laws of the jungles are practised in Burma today.

On 20th Feb., 78 a meeting was held in the Arakan State Hall, Akyab where Western Command Commander Col. Min Gaung, and Chairman of the Arakan State Major Kyaw Maung (Magh) had delivered speeches on the operation. They openly threatened the Rohingyas that they will take serious action, if necessary will pass death sentence, if any Rohingya is found to be standing against the interest of the Dragon Operation.

On 21st Feb., 78 news was obtained that most of the women (approximately 500) in the concentration camps were very harshly interrogated, helplessly beaten and were subjected to rape. It is heart breaking to report that modesty of our mothers and sisters (90% of them) were raped by the chauvinist policemen, immigration personnel, and the Burma militarymen. Even some of the young girls were taken away from the concentration camps. They are still missing.

It should not be out of point to mention here that the women and men including their children are kept in the same room without giving any facility of bath, washing, latrine, drinking and sleeping since their arrest. It is also known that the authorities are poisoning the food deliberately to the prisoners in the concentration camps. Upto the end of February nearly 50 Rohingyas died of starvation, rape, torture, murder etc. The authorities even did not allow dead bodies to be taken away by their relatives for burial. One can imagine the Nazi-like atrocities are being committed to our Rohingya people in the concentration camps.

On 1st March, 78 a group of operation party went to Mychon township of Kyauk-pyu district and arrested over 500 Rohingyas. All of them were thrown into the jails without any legal procedure.

On 3rd March, 78 the Dragon Operation team went to Kyauktaw township and arrested about 200 Rohingyas. Most of the Rohingyas of the area deserted their hearth and home in fear of rape and heinous atrocities committed by both the government officials as well as the local Maghs.

On 5th March, 78 an advance group of Burma Army under the command of Major Sein Min was posted to Buthidaung and Maungdaw area as an auxiliary force for helping the Dragon Operation. This group of army directed a terror of rapes, murders, and lootings upon the Rohingyas in the Buthidaung area.

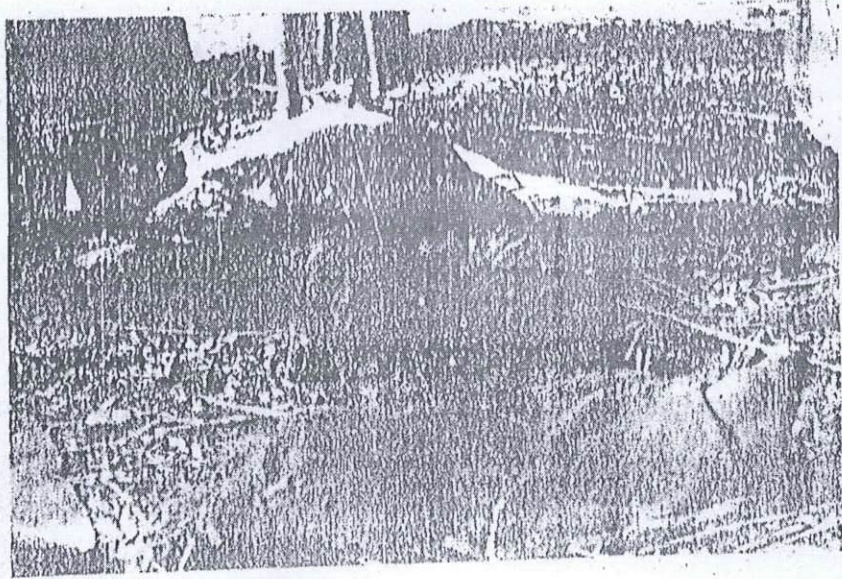
On 9th March, 78 daughters and wives of many prominent Rohingyas of Buthidaung township were brutally raped by the army men. There were also many such instances and evidences of inhuman crimes committed to lesser known people.

On 10th March, 78 the Burmese Army entered Tharatkamun and Dibruchung villages, a couple of miles away from Buthidaung town, and raped many young girls and looted the villagers.

On 15th March, 78 4 Burma Naval gun-boats arrived at Buthidaung from Akyab. These gun-boats brought 200 immigration officials including some of senior officers such as Major Sein Min, Captain San Sein, Immigration officer Paw Zin, Peoples' Judge Lung Sein Tun and Inspection officer Kyaw Tha Nu.

On 16th March, 78 at Buthidaung early in the morning, the immigration personnel started house to house inquiry and arrested more than 300 Rohingyas including some 60 young girls; some of them were high school students. The daughter of retired sub-inspector of police Abdur Rahim, the daughter and sister of Abdus Samad, the daughter of A. Basher (school teacher) are among those who were molested inhumanly by the Burmese Army, Immigration personnel and local Maghs. Judges of the mobile courts composed of immigration officials, Socialist Programme Party members (local Maghs) and other local authorities had sentenced more than 30 young girls to imprisonment on false allegations that they are aliens. They kept them in their offices all night and victimised them to rape and other cruelties.

## Victims of Massacre and Extermination



Brutally Killed by the Burmese troops

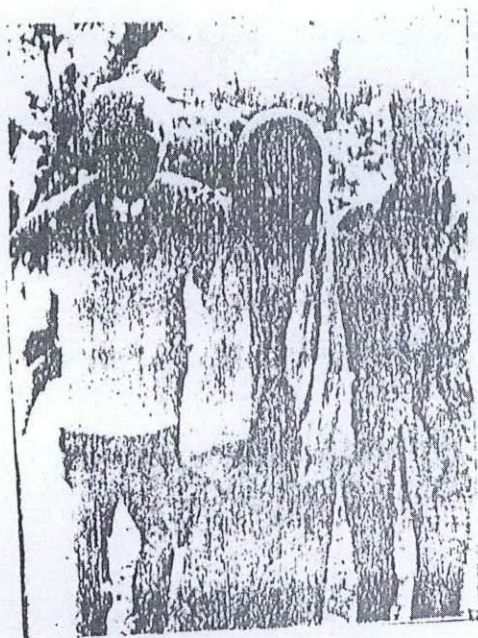


Victims of rape

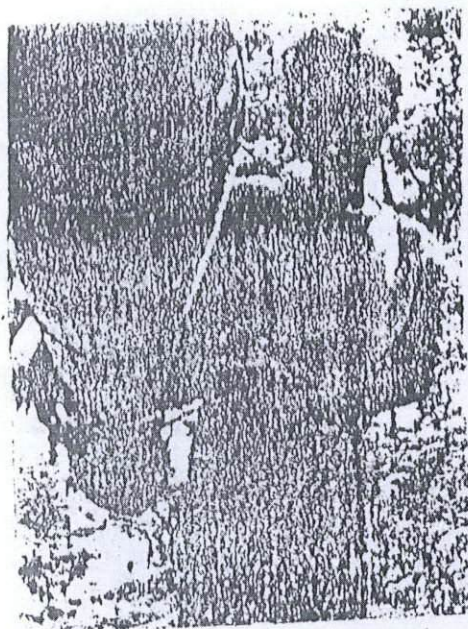


Bullet injuries

# Victims of Massacre and Extermination



Oh ! Allah save us !



In fear of victimization



God knows their fate !



Where to go ?

On 17th March, 78 about 100 imprisoned Rohingya girls were transported from Buthidaung to the Maungdaw jail. On the same day it was reported that one young girl Rabla (18 years old) was inhumanly raped by about 20 jail policemen of the Akyab Central Jail and died after some hours later.

On 18th March, <sup>19</sup>78, thousands of Rohingyas from Kyauktaw, Akyab, Rathedaung, Myebon, Buthidaung etc, continued to run away to safer places. Most of them reached Maungnama, Wabag, Kwardull (Gyiganbran), Pranpu (Minglagri), Hahnara (Santlaybran) etc. etc. villages of Maungdaw on their way to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

Exodus

On 19th March, 78 5 women of No. 2 Western Quarters, Buthidaung, who escaped into hiding in fear of rape were discovered by the Army. They were taken to the military camp where they were dishonoured and raped.

On that day the Burma Army raped wife of Samiuddin, daughter of Abdul Aziz, and killed her at the Nakyindaik Pass. They also looted 17 refugee families who were crossing the Mayu Mountain ranges.

On 20th March, 78 the Dragon Operation team went to a famous village called Nyounchaung, south of Buthidaung and launched their criminal atrocities and a clash was taken place between the operation party and the villagers. As a result 3 innocent Rohingyas were shot to death.

on the same day an oldman who was fleeing with his young girl along the Maungdaw Buthidaung road was attacked by 7 local Maghs, and they carried away his daughter forcibly. The young girl was raped and killed by them.

On 21st March, 78 the operation team went to Ngwedaung (Moldaung) village where they looted and tortured the villagers. So, most of the villagers went to the hill side to cross over the Mayu mountain ranges but the Burma Army followed and captured 30 of them. They were tortured barbarously and detained them in the Buthidaung jail.

Rakhine  
The nationalist Maghs were in full partnership in looting the Rohingya villages specially for rice, paddy, and other live stock.

On 24th March, 78 a meeting was held at the Maungdaw Cinema Hall where the Maungdaw Party Unit General Secretary Kyaw Aye presided over the meeting. He strongly warned the people of the area not to help those Rohingyas who ran away from their villages.

On 25th March, 78 Captain Zaw Win (Magh), from the Pakira Bazar (Thamantha) camp, arrested many renowned Muslim religious preachers in Maungdaw :

1. Maulana Noman S/o Maulana Motiur Rahman (35 years old) Hatimara village,
2. Maulana Mubarak S/o Darbesh Ali (35 years old), Hatimara village,
3. Maulana Zafar S/o Darbesh Ali (30 years old), Hatimara village,
4. Ameer Dil Mohammed S/o Sawkit (34 years old), Hatimara village,

This beastly Army officer tortured all the Maulanas very inhumanly on allegation that they have been giving food and shelter to the refugees who came over from Buthidaung side.

On the same allegation the ex-headman Sultan Ahmed of Dudan village and Haji Sultan of Fokirapara (Krarubran) were also arrested and beaten mercilessly. Later they were taken to the Maungdaw jail.

By 26th March, 78 the following villages of Buthidaung town were wholly or partly burnt down by the Burma Army or by the Magh nationalists.

Dabinsara (Dawinsara), Zadibrung, Kadirpara, Gonibarpara, Nakindauk, Aung Hla Bran (Morissabil), Ngaranchaung, Kyinokthi (Kinisi), Hokkapara, Kagyapa Kanbran, Monirbil and so on.

On 27th March, 78 hundreds of refugees were arrested by the Burma Army, and were detained in the 4th Mile concentration camp (surrounded by barbed wires), Maungdaw, 15 girls were forcibly hauled away from the concentration camp to the Army camp for unholy purposes. Three of the girls are still missing.

On 29th March, 78 the Western Command as well as Regional Party Chairman Col. Min Gaung accompanied by other 15 high officials reached Buthidaung from Akyab and held a closed door meeting in the party Unit Office, Buthidaung. In the evening the Colonel, and the team proceeded to Maungdaw.

On 30th March, 78 in the early morning Col. Min Gaung and his Company left for Alaythangyaw (Haisurata) sub-township and instructed the Dragon Operation team to be on alert as the situation was grave due to mass exodus of Rohingyas towards Maungdaw area.

The late father of present commander in chief of Myanmar Armed Forces Sr. Gen. MIN AUNG HLAING

## SUMMARY

In the wake of this Dragon Operation nearly 2,00,000 Rohingyas were rendered homeless in Buthidaung, Rathidaung, Kyauktaw, Akyab, Myebon, etc. Being driven out of their homes, these unfortunate Rohingyas took shelter in the villages of Maungdaw area such as pranpru (Minglagri), Darugarzaga (Thaychaung) Borgiarbil (Kyauklayga), Nayapara (Ywa Thit) Balukhali, Zambonia, Wabeg, Dowrabil, Kawarbil (Gyiganbran) and Maunganama etc. etc.

More than 30 villages of Buthidaung township such as Kwasoon, Sangodan, Pran Hla Waragyunt, Alaychaung, Kagyapa, Maraungana, Maunggritnung, Nakyindauk, Migyounggong-swe, Aichaung, Thanganat, Khramsama, Scinyanwac, Mangnama, Palldaung, Tatminchaung, Nanragoon, Ngaranchaung, Letwaydat, Scinyanbran, Phokaungchaung, Kizarbil, Ngwedaung, Chowaprun, San Oo brung, and Buthidaung etc. are either totally or partially, depopulated.

About 15 thousands helpless people crossed the Naff river to seek shelter in Bangladeshi. Unfortunately these Rohingya refugees were being forced back into the river with strong warning not to land on the soil of Bangladesh. Now these homeless Rohingya refugees have nowhere to go, but to hide here and there in the bushes and jungles of Arakan or face the beastly Immigration and Burma Army officials who are keeping them away to return to their homes in the villages. It is utmost necessary to find an urgent solution to save the lives of these human beings who are passing their miserable life without proper food and shelter, and security for their life.

The extent of the suffering of our people, the Rohingya Muslims, in Burma at the hands of Facist Dictator General Ne Win is beyond expression. If the racial discriminative policy and the on-going genocide against the Rohingyas in Arakan are not immediately and effectively arrested at this high time, then only Heaven knows where destiny will lead us in future. The heinous acts of depopulating centuries-old Muslim settlements in Arakan by both covert and overt policy of Burmese Government are being highly accelerated by now. Our ardent appeal before the World Bodies and the United Nations is to make an impartial investigation into the matter of the on-going genocide against the Rohingyas and immediately halt their extermination from Arakan in Burma.



## APPENDIX

Arakan is a state of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma situated at the North-west coastal region of Burma.

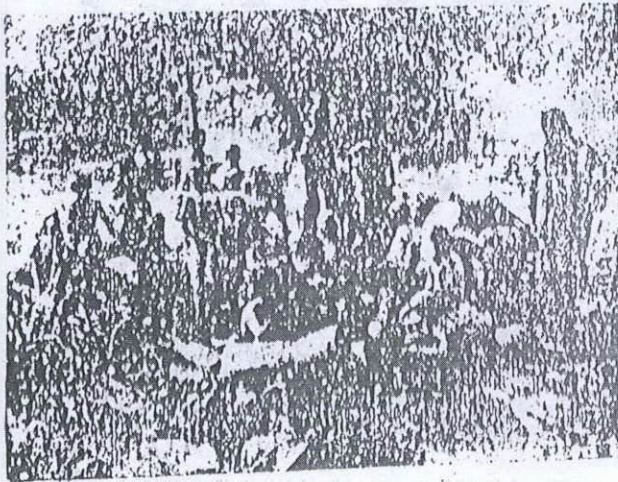
The state of Arakan is inhabited with the indigenous races such as Rohingyas, Maghs, Chakmas, Mrus, Khomis, Saacks, Chins etc. The two major races in Arakan are Rohingyas who practise the religion of Islam and the Maghs who profess the cult of Buddhism. The other races are hill tribes and constitutes a very small percentage of the over all population of Arakan.

### CAUSES OF GENOCIDE AGAINST THE MUSLIMS IN ARAKAN (BURMA)

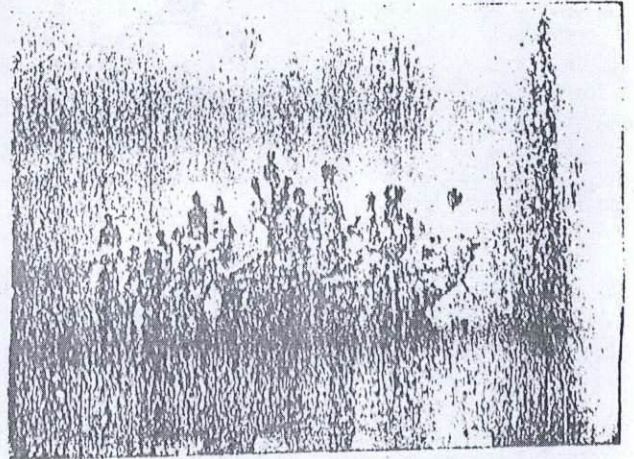
#### 1. RACISM :

Totally based on racial prejudices, the fascist government of Burma under General Ne Win is conducting a highly mischievous and false propaganda against the Rohingyas (Muslim) of Arakan branding them as illegal immigrants and aliens without ever raising this question before any government according to the principles of International law. Consequently, the Magh Nationalists (Buddhists) together with the help of the Burmese Army and other Government authorities have long been committing atrocious massacre to drive away the Rohingyas from their motherland, just the way the jews did to the Arabs in Palestine. This premeditated and malacious plan is devised to make Arakan vastly Magh majority state by expelling the Rohingyas who constitute nearly 80% of the population in northern portion of Arakan. For materialising this barbarous scheme, the Maghs have massacred thousands of Muslims and burnt down hundreds of Muslim villages. They confiscated lands and properties of Rohingyas, and distributed them to the Magh Nationalist Buddhists for new settlements and villages.

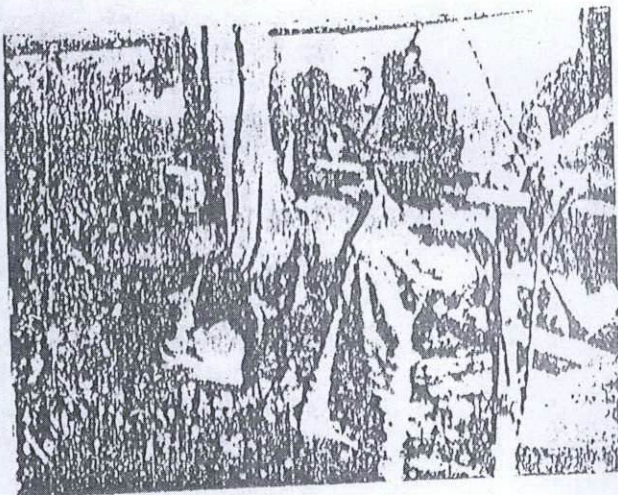
## Victims of Massacre and Extermination



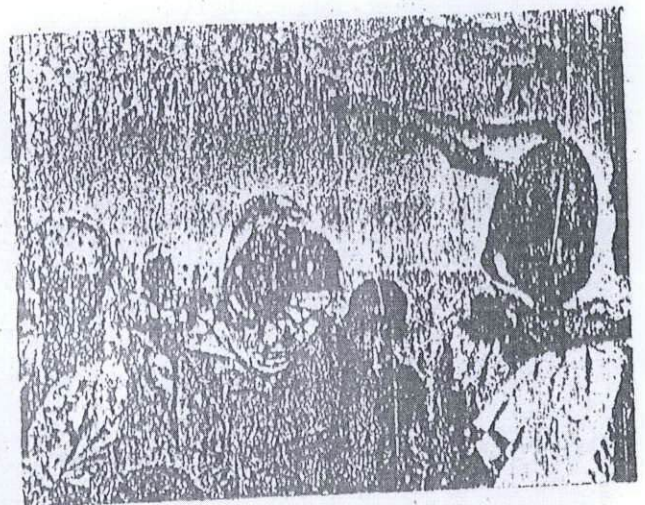
Destitutes waiting on the Naaf  
bank to be pushed back



Pushed back - no hope of life !

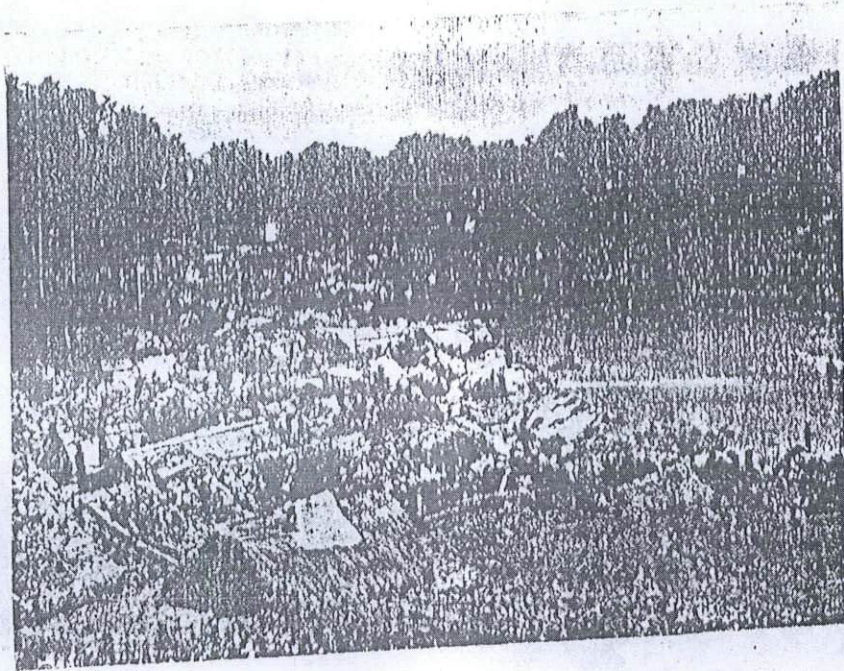


Gun shot



Distress mothers with kids in their arms

## Victims of Massacre and Extermination



Improvised sheds of refugees



Wounded brother being rushed towards Bangladesh



An aged woman refugee weeping in distress

## 2. RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY :

Burma is predominantly a Buddhist country and the government is also run by the Buddhists. The present day popular slogan in Burma among the nationalist Buddhists is "to be a true Burmese is to be a Buddhist". On this factual evidences of religious bigotry, the Burmese Army (mostly consist of Buddhists) are fully collaborating with the Magh Nationalists in the genocidal extermination of Rohingyas and their expulsion from their homeland in Arakan. The devilish dream of these Nazi-like fascist people is to look down or frown upon all other religions. Islam is the main target of this bigotry in Arakan. The principal objective is to assimilate Muslims into Buddhism and exterminate all those who adhere to Islam ardently.

## 3. HISTORICAL ANIMOSITY :

The Magh Nationalists have been culturing extreme hatred and animosity toward Rohingyas--due to Muslim domination of Arakan for centuries. For example, it used to be a common practice to issue coins and medal bearing Kallmah of Islam (that is, confession of faith in Islam) using Arabic Alphabet. The official language of the kings of Arakan used to be the persian language until the year 1836 (that is, 12 years further beyond the conquest of Arakan by the British in 1824). Many of the kings of Arakan were Muslims. Some of the names of the kings who ruled Arakan are as follows along with their ancient Pall titles adopted for the appeasement of their Buddhist subjects.

- o Sulaiman Shah (Narameikhla) ruled Arakan from 1404-34 A.D.
- o Ali Khan (Min Kari) ruled Arakan from 1434-59 A.D.
- o Kalimah Shah (Basawpyu) ruled Arakan from 1459-82 A.D.
- o " " " " " "
- o " " " " " "
- o Husain Shah (Minkhamong) ruled Arakan from 1612-22 A.D.

## 4. SECESSION OF ARAKAN FROM BURMA :

The Maghs have always dreamed and professed openly to fight against Burmese Army in order to secede Arakan from the rest of Burma. Arakan was always a separate country and was never ruled by the Burmese except for a period of 40 years. The Maghs feel extermination of Rohingyas is necessary so that the Maghs could become the only majority race in whole Arakan, and thereby they would be in a better position to achieve their cherished dream of seceding Arakan from the rest of Burma, and become a separate independent country.

5. TERRITORIAL CLAIM OF MAGHS ON BANGLADESH :

The Maghs claim that the southern part of Bangladesh including the region of Chittagong Hill Tracts is an Integral part of Greater Arakan on the basis of ancient kingdom of Arakan. The Magh nationalists as well as the communists in Arakan have vowed to attain this territorial expansion from Bangladesh. For achieving this ambitious territorial expansion, the Maghs again feel extermination of Rohingya is extremely important because the Rohingyas appear to them as a real danger and an obstacle in the accomplishment of their expansionist goal. The Maghs believe the Rohingyas will take side with their Muslim brethren against the establishment of a greater Arakan for the Maghs.

Dated :- 11th April, 1978.

ROHINGYA PATRIOTIC FRONT.  
ARAKAN (BURMA)

## Trouble in Arakan

ALARMING reports about the pathetic plight of poor people in Arakan Province of Burma — an overwhelming majority of whom happen to be Muslims — have evoked understandable concern and distress. Several appeals have been addressed to individual leaders, institutions and world organisations against what is termed as an "extermination" campaign particularly in Akyab where many killings were reported. Those approached included the United Nations Secretary-General, the UN Human Rights Commission, the UN Minorities Committee and the Islamic Secretariat. It has been suggested that the Islamic Conference should take up the matter at various levels and forums including the Burmese Government. While an element of exaggeration in the reports may not be ruled out, Rangoon's reluctance in the matter is entirely inscrutable.

Persistent reports of persecuted Arakanese Muslims being pushed out of their hearths and homes have accentuated the gravity of the situation. In sheer desperation they cross over to neighbouring areas and travel as far as into Pakistan for protection. The Government of Burma will be well advised to look into the problem seriously and sympathetically. Apart from the ethnic angle, whose existence should be a matter of concern to the Burmese Government, there might be an economic dimension to the issue. Economic distress and unemployment in the country might have driven irresponsible sections of the population in one of the most backward areas of Burma to predatory attacks on the Muslim minority. But in the final analysis it is a question of maintaining law and order as well as protecting the life, honour and property of a minority. A sense of insecurity among a sizable segment of the population belonging to a particular faith and region is obviously not in the interest of the Burmese Government. The extremist insurgents and separatists who are out to widen their net and broaden their base would let no opportunity go by to enlist dissident groups wherever they could be found. Any possibility of two fronts on the eastern as well as western flanks of Burma, however, remote at present, should be covered by eliminating factors of dissonance.

The prolongation of an internal conflict in the border areas of Burma would naturally be disquieting for its immediate neighbours. But proximity apart, the peculiar "complexion" and magnitude of the trouble in Arakan attracts attention even in distant lands. Although it will still be premature to bracket the existing state of affairs there with the happenings in Southern Philippines, continued failure to bring things under control could pose a parallel problem. Informal approaches and discreet diplomatic persuasion by friendly countries may produce a salutary effect on the situation. Meanwhile the fate and future of tens of thousands uprooted from their settled abodes should be looked at by the world from a humanitarian angle. The Muslim world, particularly its richer states, must come to the assistance of their stricken brethren at this time. Their combined weight and efforts to alleviate the anguish of the affected people will of course go a long way in providing badly needed succour. In this context and towards this objective the Dakar Conference could contribute substantially.

April 23, 1978

## Suffering Refugees

Reports that have appeared in the Press in the last few days about the influx of a large number of Burmese nationals into Bangladesh are truly disquieting. The number of persons who have so far taken refuge in Bangladesh is estimated to be around thirty thousand and some of these refugees are reported to have said that another forty to fifty thousand Burmese Muslims are likely to enter Bangladesh. Most of these refugees are either children or old men and women. A number of them have died, it is said, from bullet injuries. Those who have met these refugees describe their condition as pitiable.

Bangladesh thus finds itself dragged to a situation which demands and merits immediate attention purely on humanitarian grounds. This movement of the refugees from across the border in a large number started in March last. Attempts were reportedly made to stop this migration by not allowing these refugees to enter. But such attempts melted away soon in consideration of the suffering of these poor people who claimed that they had been driven out of their homeland and had been subjected to various kinds of torture. It is impossible to ignore such conditions and to shut eyes on these helpless people. If Bangladesh has decided not to forcibly resist the entry of such people, it has been compelled to do so for reasons of service to humanity. It is certainly not an easy job to tackle such a large number of refugees. No country would probably like to do so if it is within

her powers to avoid it. Certainly not Bangladesh, which, being a developing country itself with limited resources, has many areas of priority to take care of. But Bangladesh is left with no other option but to allow these people to temporarily enter her territory. Human considerations must reign supreme, and we believe we have reached, in spite of our poverty and other limitations, a point in civilization where we cannot permit our basic values to be distorted. In short, we cannot be oblivious of our responsibilities towards the suffering humanity. No one, we believe, should.

Bangladesh had sent a special envoy to Rangoon to discuss this problem. The Burmese Foreign Minister was also here a few days back, and we are sure that the Bangladesh point of view on this crucial issue was presented to him during his visit. It was only natural to hope that the situation would improve after this exchange of visits. It has not. Unfortunately, in fact, the reports that have appeared in the press go to show that it has further deteriorated. In spite of this we in Bangladesh sincerely hope that adequate measures would immediately be taken to bring this large scale migration to an end. This must happen immediately. Those who have already taken shelter in Bangladesh would, we hope, be able to return to their homeland rather sooner than later. We also hope that no further refugees will enter Bangladesh, and, even if they do, they would be able to return to Burma in no time along with others. We sincerely hope and believe that the Burmese

authorities will cooperate with Bangladesh Government in working out an arrangement that will effectively take care of this problem, end the suffering of these people and ensue their safe return home.

Bangladesh has all along followed a foreign policy the principal element of which is friend-

THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER

ship with all countries, especially with the neighbours. A firm believer in the equal sovereignty of the nations as she is, Bangladesh has unshakable faith in the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a country. However, the suffering of the refugees must be the principal consideration in all efforts to settle the problem as quickly as possible.

DACCA SATURDAY APRIL 29 1978



Victims of the Dragon King Operation

### Refugee influx a serious diplomatic issue: Kennedy

Senator Edward M. Kennedy of the United States has said that the continued flow of tens of thousands of refugees into Bangladesh from Burma "represents not only an immediate humanitarian problem, but a serious diplomatic issue that must be of greater concern to the international community and to the United States," says BSS.

In a statement last week in the US Senate, Kennedy appealed to all concerned to help resolve the root cause of the massive refugee influx into Bangladesh. He also urged the US Secretary of State "to strongly support the United

Nations initiative and to work directly".

Senator Kennedy referred to the appeal made by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for a 15.5 million dollar emergency relief supplies for the Burmese refugees. He said that while on a mission to Geneva recently, he had occasion to meet the UNHCR, Mr Poul Hartling and also Bangladesh Ambassador to discuss the growing humanitarian crisis among Burmese fleeing violence and chaos across Bangladesh border.

He said, he was pleased that the US Administration had moved rapidly to respond to the High Commissioner's appeal authorising an immediate contribution of 500,000 dollars from the International Disaster Assistance Funds. He said he was assured that more aid will follow when additional needs were identified.



July 1969

# ROHINGYAS OF ARAKAN

R. Obaida

The Rohingyas of Burma are being harrassed, molested, persecuted, oppressed and massacred. But these facts are known to very few people. Following is a summary of their historical background and awful plight.

**Historical Background.** Arakan, the north-west division of Burma, is inhabited with indigenous races like Moghs, Rohingyas, Mroos, Saacks, Khmwes and Khamans of which Rohingyas and Khamans are Muslims and the rest are Buddhists or Animists. Rohingyas formed the second biggest community of Arakan. One could trace from history that the territory between the east bank of the river Kaladan, the longest river in Arakan, and the river Naaf, which demarcates the boundary between East Pakistan and Burma, had been popularly known as Rowang, i.e. Rohingya Land, in which Rohingyas formed 70% of the population up to the year 1942.

Rohingyas are the descendants of Arabs, Pathans and the Muslims of Bengal who, in response to the invitation of early Moghal rulers, had come to Arakan in the eighth century A.D. They settled all over Arakan but were eventually transferred to and became concentrated in the territory between the river Kaladan and the river Naaf. Gradually these Muslims intermixed by marriage and transformed into a single race called Reh-himgya, now known as Rohingya.

Rowang has been a region of enduring peace and tranquillity through the ages. But it is an irony of fate that its inhabitants were massacred and driven away from their homeland. In 1942, a group of Burmese Thakin Party, headed by one Bo Ran Aung, clandestinely organized and supplied arms and

ammunitions to the Moghs of Rowang and brought about a pogrom in which thousands of Rohingyas were indiscriminately slaughtered and driven away, turning the eastern region of Rowang a non-Rohingya territory till the year 1948. During the period the Thakin Party of Burma filled up the deserted land with Moghs. After 1948, when Burma attained independence, Rohingyas appealed to the new Burmese Government to allow them to be rehabilitated in their own land, but it was in vain. Henceforth thousands of Rohingyas had become homeless and are pitifully wandering in several countries. A large number of them are seen concentrated and passing miserable life in the western region of Rowang which is presently named as the Mayu Territory.

**Oppressions.** An inhuman policy is being pursued to uproot the Rohingyas from their country. The Mayu Territory covers an area of 5,000 sq. miles and has a population of approximately 800,000 of which 95% are Rohingyas. The Government of Burma has created such a situation that the very existence of the Rohingyas even in the Mayu Territory is almost impossible. Political oppression, molestation, religious repression, killings and the usurpation of fundamental rights, residuary powers, citizenships, etc. are the methods that the authorities have adopted to uproot the Rohingyas from their motherland. It is a perplexing question that why the Burmese authorities are torturing and trying to exterminate the Rohingyas, albeit they are bonafide citizens, loyal to the country and obedient to the Government. No one, it is firmly claimed, shall find

any crime on the part of the Rohingyas; committed against the Government, or fellow Burmese, to ask for the imposition of such an immense penalty as to drive them out of their homeland.

The Mayu Territory is bleeding. The Rohingyas are being persecuted, and plunder and destruction of villages and farms and desecration of shrines and Mosques have become a recurring feature of life. Mosques are burnt down, destroyed and locked up. Religious gatherings are strictly prohibited. Army personnel and other Government officials make the Mosques their camps whenever they go on patrolling and inspection tours. Even sins are committed and the Rohingyas are tortured there by the security forces. Severe restrictions have been imposed upon the Rohingya students and Government employees to offer Juma prayers. Emergency meetings and other official or public functions are deliberately held at the Juma prayer times. Any attempt or even humble request to hold the Juma prayer is awarded with beatings, expulsion and dismissal from service. Since Maulvi, Hujios and other religious persons are also not spared from harassment and torture, preaching of Islam has become like a crime in Burma. Pilgrimage to Mecca has totally been banned since 1962. The Muslim employees of the Government are forced to shave their beards.

Groaning under an unbearable economic burden the Rohingyas are hardly in a position to return the money they borrowed from non-Muslim money lenders. Their economic bondage has reduced them to the status of slaves and has robbed them of the minimum sense of security. Almost 95% of the Rohingya

## Contd: ROHINGYAS OF ARAKAN <sup>42</sup> 4

population of the Mayu Territory are farmers or agricultural labourers. Naturally they depend upon land and its products. Under the present socialist economic policy, the Rohingyas are allowed to cultivate land on the condition that they will surrender about 90% of their production, the rate of which is calculated before cultivation. Every year due to many reasons, such as natural catastrophe, rate of production as compared to the rate of pre-calculation goes down. In such conditions cultivators are unable to submit their products according to their agreement. But the authorities show no mercy towards them and seize their products and properties as punishment. Moreover, it is a duty for the Rohingya labourers to make land fit for cultivation and till that for the non-Muslims without getting any remuneration. Individual and private trades or businesses are not permitted to the Rohingyas. Opportunity of new employment in State services has been restricted to these people. Essential commodities are sold by Government shops, but most of the Rohingyas are denied the right to purchase from these shops and hence they have to buy in black market at an exorbitant rate.

The Rohingyas are bonafide citizens of the Union of Burma, but they have no freedom of speech,

assembly, association and even movement. They are not allowed to travel to the interior of Arakan and Burma. They are also not allowed to live in any part of Burma other than the Mayu Territory. Their movable and immovable properties and National Registration Cards (a document which has been distributed to every citizen of Burma) are being confiscated. Frequent surprise raids to the Rohingya villages are made by combined groups of Military and Immigration personnels in which innocent people are rounded up, their National Registration Cards snatched and they are put into jails. Some Rohingyas were deported to Pakistan, but as they were not Pakistanis the Burmese Government had to take them back. Now the captives are not allowed to settle in their places but are exposed to death in jails. It is a routine to persecute and torture them, even their women and children. All this is obviously inhuman and atrocious. May this writer appeal to all peace loving nations of the world to oppose these barbaric activities?

Human conscience cannot and must not tolerate cruelty and injustice. If the Rohingyas are criminals and their women and innocent children have violated the Burmese laws, why are the authorities reluctant to try them in proper courts and to give them the right to seek justice?

mes in north-west Burma, were waiting to enter Bangladesh. They also spoke of torture, rape, arson and looting. Some even claimed that they were evicted by the Burmese troops at gunpoint. Though these factors call for a sympathetic approach towards refugees, it is obvious that the Bangladesh Government cannot do much about it, apart from turning away illegal immigrants. This is what it has done.

The Union of Burma has long been plagued by revolts and civil wars. Previously, the news of such turbulence reached the outside world only when it spilled over the border into Thailand. This time, happenings on the border on the other side have broken Burma's somewhat remarkable isolation from the rest of the world. It was reported some time ago that in the course of their long-range insurgencies on eastern border, the Communist guerillas were being supported by traditionally anti-Communist separatist insurgents. It should not be surprising to find some traces of separatism among the persecuted people of Arakan Province. It is, thus, essentially a matter of absorbing various ethnic communities into a more cohesive Burmese nation. This task is made difficult by the existence of many races and languages in Burma. More than 100 indigenous languages, not mere dialects, have been counted. This potential hurdle in the way of integration has been aided by persisting insurgencies and a lack of law and order in large, peripheral mountain and plateau areas. All this could be conducive to persecution of minorities.

Though official figures are not available, it is estimated that Muslims constitute about ten per cent of Burma's popula-

## Burmese refugees

WITH Bangladesh sealing off its 150-mile border with Burma after an influx of several thousand refugees, the situation in the Arakan Province of Burma appears to have assumed the proportions of a crisis. Reports about trouble in the area, affecting largely the Muslim community, had been appearing for some days. An intermittent flow of refugees was also there and quite a few of them had come as far away as Pakistan. But the crossing over of so many thousands

in a sudden rush is an extraordinary eruption. While sealing off its border with Burma, the Bangladesh Government has expressed concern at the "massive influx of Burmese nationals into our territory". Dacca had been quietly negotiating with Rangoon since the refugees started coming early last month but these consultations evidently produced no positive results. In fact, the refugees have claimed that 50,000 to 60,000 Muslims, reportedly evicted from their ho-

## Crises

## Flight of the Rohingyas

tion. No Government should allow the alienation of a large and loyal segment of the country's population, least of all one that is confronted with a variety of divisive and disruptive forces. It is sincerely hoped that the Burmese Government will establish law and order in the troubled area and protect the affected population from persecution and eviction. Meanwhile, the concern being expressed in some Muslim countries is quite understandable. A number of appeals have been made to world organizations and individual leaders, including the Islamic Secretariat, the UN Secretary-General and the UN Human Rights Commission. Our religious kinship with the afflicted has no doubt enhanced our humanitarian concern. We trust the Government of Burma will take steps to restore law and order in the Arakan area and bring to book the lawless elements who have been threatening the lives, honour and property of the Muslims of the area.

They had been there ever since Islam began its long, leap-frogging swirl through Southeast Asia, a devout and self-reliant people who proudly called themselves the Rohingya. Their land lay in the rugged Arakan territory of southwestern Burma, with India to the north and Bangladesh to the west. And while much of Burma seethed through war, colonialism, independence and insurgency, the Rohingyas lived quietly and contentedly in their frontier fastness.

That, at least, was how tearful Rohingya refugees told it last week. In the past month at least 110,000 of them have poured across the border

into Bangladesh, and the tide was still flowing this week. The trauma and trappings of the dispossessed are easily seen in the area around Cox's Bazaar, a beach resort 95 mi. from Chittagong, and in the towns that dot the "finger" of Bangladesh lying between Burma and the Bay of Bengal — Gundhum, Nhila, Whaikhyang. Rohingya Muslims struggle in bearing babies in slings, bedrolls under their arms. Some carry their parents, too ill or old to walk, on their backs. Women beg strangers to listen while they tell of husbands and brothers shot dead, houses looted and burned, mothers and daughters raped while their families were forced to watch. "They are coming at the rate of 2,000 to 3,000 a day," a hurried local official told Iranian correspondent, Safa Haeri in the town of Nhila, 100 mi. southeast of Cox's Bazaar, last week. "The ration of milk and rice I have is hardly sufficient for 2,000 people — and already I have 20,000 in this camp."

Yet if the signs of distress and exodus are clearly visible, the reasons are not. The Bangladesh government has no explanation — not for the record, anyway. For its part, Rangoon waited until this week before breaking what had seemed to be an embarrassed silence: the refugees, said Burmese government officials, were actually Bangladeshi nationals fleeing an "immigration check" code-named Dragon King.

The refugees say Dragon King was launched in February. But that is the only point on which their accounts dovetail with Rangoon's. They claim the operation is an anti-Muslim drive intended to force them from their



ASIAWEEK, May 19, 1978



The unending stream. A large number of Burmese Muslim refugees entered through Teknat on Saturday opening yet another entry point.—Times

# Contd. "Flight of the Rohingyas"

ancestral homes, and that it was preceded by similar though smaller campaigns in 1955, 1959 and 1975.

Some of the refugees have set up a "Committee in Aid of Burmese Rohingyas" at Cox's Bazaar, where last week they issued an "appeal to the world community." In recent years, they claimed, some 400,000 of their number had left Arakan to migrate to Bangladesh and other Muslim countries farther west. Moreover, they said, previous campaigns had been only minor affairs compared with the "large-scale extermination" aims of Dragon King; so far, 150,000 Rohingyas in the Budhidoung area and 50,000 more in Maungdaw have been forced to flee for their lives.

Whatever the reasons, the exodus certainly took neither government by surprise. Bangladeshi officials visited Rangoon several weeks ago — evidently in an attempt to avert what they saw as an approaching crisis — and only last month a ministerial-level Burmese delegation went to Dacca. That the problem actually worsened after those talks is seen by diplomats as dramatic proof of deep-rooted problems about which both Bangladesh and Burma have chosen to remain silent.

Political observers fear the situation will get a lot worse before it gets better, and not merely because of the political implications. Bangladesh, one of the poorest nations on earth, does not have the capacity to support a sudden influx of destitutes who may already number more than 200,000. The territory into which the refugees are flowing is particularly backward even by Bangladeshi standards: trees provide the only protection from a scorching sun, and there is no provision for additional food supplies. Many babies have been born since the influx began; most have died of starvation or heat.

Already, too, the strain has begun to inflame local passions. Trees near refugee camps are festooned with banners and posters bearing slogans such as DOWN WITH THE FASCIST REGIME IN RANGOON and NO FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MURDERERS IN BURMA. One local functionary told Correspondent Haerli:

"If a peaceful solution isn't found quickly, the only possible solution will be war. If the Burmese won't take these people back, the best way for us to cope with the problem will be to arm the refugees and help them form a liberation front. Let them go back to their country and fight for their homes and their language and their dignity. I'm sure Rangoon will understand that."

Confirming the sudden rise in tensions, the Burmese government this week charged that "armed bands" from Bangladesh had attacked soldiers conducting a drive against illegal immigrants. Burma's official news agency said Bangladeshi police had also fired on security outposts and army patrols. Dacca responded by lodging a formal protest against Burmese policy on the Muslims of Arakan. According to some sources in the Bangladesh capital, President Zia ur-Rahman was on the verge of calling off next month's presidential election — a step made even more likely this week when a half-million government employees went on strike to press pay demands.

While a poor and backward corner of Asia moved closer to crisis point, diplomats in Dacca, New Delhi and elsewhere this week expressed fears that a "third party" might soon become embroiled — if it wasn't already. Any serious attempt to launch a Rohingya Muslim "liberation front," for instance, would be sure to win Arab attention. More immediately, observers pointed out, popular feelings in Bangladesh could turn fiercely against the country's Buddhist minority (there are some 30,000 Buddhists in Cox's Bazaar alone).

Most ominous of all, reported sources in Dacca, was the spreading suspicion that big-power interests — presumably Soviet, since the Russians maintain naval installations at Chittagong — might be involved. If that is true, the world may hear much more of the weeping Rohingyas in the weeks and months ahead.

Mr Hauter wrote that about 100 of the Muslim peasants were shot to death and a large number wounded during the machine-gunning.

Before that incident, he had visited the refugees huddling across the river for several days. A number of them already had been wounded by bullets or had their faces bashed in by blows from rifle butts, he said. They were sucking leaves — their only nourishment except earthworms.

Since April 23, the Bangladesh Government has allowed refugees to cross the border, but is too poor to take care of them, M. Hauter said.

His last sight of the nightmare at the border was a woman scratching the ground with her finger nails in search of something to eat.

He said the 40,000 to 60,000 refugees who have crossed the border accuse the Burmese Army and Police of unleashing a genocide campaign called "Operation Dragon" on Feb. 6.

The French correspondent said the Burmese Government, weak and threatened by rebellions in several provinces, was trying to stay in power by sacrificing a Muslim minority to the Buddhist majority, "especially since the Rohingyas had rich rice lands" — AFP

## EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT Burmese Muslims machinegunned

PARIS, May 13: Thirty Burmese soldiers set up light machine-guns and fire into a mass of Muslim refugees on Bangladesh border on April 23, the Florida weekly news magazine "Le Nouvel Observateur" reported today.

In an eye-witness account, the Observateur's correspondent Francois Hauter affirmed that the massacre was an episode in a deliberate Burmese Government plan to drive a million Rohingyas — Burmese Muslims from the Arakan Province — out of the country.

Bangladesh border guards had been preventing the 18,000 refugees from crossing a river into Bangladesh, M. Hauter wrote.

But they were so shocked at the machine-gunning that they shouldered their rifles and opened their fire on the Burmese soldiers, he related in another article in the newspaper "Le Quotidien de Paris".

Three of the soldiers fell, and the rest fled. The refugees stampeded across the river, some of them sinking into the mud beneath the weight of the wounded people they were carrying.

A woman with a deep stab wound in the left breast said she was the sole survivor of 17 women attacked earlier by Burmese soldiers. She said they cut off the breast of the other women, then stabbed them to death, but let her flee to tell the other Rohingyas and terrify them.



The evicted Burmese Muslims

## Long Drawn Conspiracy To Evict Arakanese Muslims

Dhittagong, May 5:—  
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 paganda against us that we  
 are not to be considered as  
 Burmese citizens purely  
 false plea that we are Mus-  
 lims and consequently  
 allens.

To suppress our legit-  
 mate rights to live in our  
 ancestral homes with peace  
 and security. The unscrupu-  
 lous racist authority has  
 yet against the Muslim  
 nationals there hundreds of  
 Immigration officials as-  
 sisted by armed forces who  
 are carrying out brutal  
 operations all over Arakan  
 with the dirty intention of  
 eliminating the Rohingyas,  
 they added.

About the present anni-  
 hilation drive of Muslim  
 nationals from Arakan, the  
 refugees said, the Burmese  
 government has taken a  
 decision to conduct the  
 general census of population  
 in the country during the  
 current year and added, it is  
 no secret today that the  
 government will do so after  
 oraftily completing the  
 work of disqualifying the  
 Muslims from their right of  
 citizenship in as many num-  
 bers as possible so that the  
 government might not lose  
 the chance of forestalling  
 the emergence of the truth  
 regarding the actual streng-  
 th of Muslims.

They maintained that there  
 were already several immi-  
 gration operations of differ-  
 ent categories over the  
 last few years which were  
 known as "sabo operation"  
 during which tens

of thousands of Ro-  
 hingyas' national registra-  
 tion cards (NRCS) were  
 seized without any legal  
 basis, on various pretext,  
 and were never returned.  
 Besides, in fantastic and  
 ridiculous ways thousands  
 and thousands of the poor  
 and natural born Rohingyan  
 were classified as foreigners,  
 alleging to have infiltrated  
 from Bangladesh with ultra-  
 for motives of perishing  
 them by hook or crook or  
 in the alternative to push  
 them out enmasse to cross  
 the border.

The evictees said, since  
 February last, the govern-  
 ment has started another  
 operation of a several nature  
 known as "Naga Min Ope-  
 ration" under which thou-  
 sands of honest Rohingya  
 citizens including men,  
 women, girls, boys and  
 children have been indiscrim-  
 inately rounded up and  
 taken into unlawful deten-  
 tion in spite of having authen-  
 tic evidence of their time-  
 honoured settlements in the  
 area.

Giving elaborate descrip-  
 tion of this heinous "Naga-  
 min operation", they said,  
 the ruthless immigration  
 operation parties usually  
 cordone Rohingya villages  
 and quarters at dawn (the  
 time of prayers for Muslims)  
 and forcibly enter dwelling  
 houses. Then search starts  
 terrifying the inmates before  
 dragging them to "concentra-  
 tion camps" the name of  
 interrogation.

They informed that these  
 brutal and venomous  
 personnel don't have been  
 the good sense of pitilessly  
 treating the "Pardashla"  
 females and respectable old  
 people.

It was reported, the  
 arrested people are confined  
 in unspacious places with  
 out facilities for taking re-  
 and food.

According to some eye  
 witnesses, those who are  
 taken to the central agricul-  
 tural godowns at Ahyab  
 and the cantonment are  
 very often molested, man-  
 handled, whipped and even  
 raped to death. Many of  
 them also suffered deaths  
 due to starvation as neither  
 the government makes any  
 arrangement for supplying  
 food to them nor their near-  
 est and dearest ones are  
 allowed to help them.

In many cases their  
 relations and sympathisers  
 who go to meet them with  
 food are chased with guns  
 and mercilessly beaten.

On the pretext of making  
 individual interrogations  
 males females and young-  
 sters are separated in  
 groups from their respec-  
 tive families and then  
 carried away to unknown  
 destinations. In course of  
 their removal from place  
 to place some even expire  
 due to fatigue. Mal-treat-  
 ment and starvation.

The reports say young  
 women are picked up and  
 taken away for unholy  
 purpose. Many of  
 whom, are raped and  
 killed. Moreover, being  
 unable to withstand  
 various kinds of tortures  
 some pregnant women suffer  
 red abortions and many  
 others are still languishing  
 in illegal confinement.

It is a common report  
 that house to house search,  
 sweeping arrests, molesta-  
 tions, duress, barbaric  
 treatment, rape, death due  
 to starvation, diseases, non  
 supply of food of stuff, food  
 poisoning and non availa-  
 bility of medicine in deten-  
 tion camps and Jails during  
 operation period and after  
 have become regular featu-  
 res today in Arakan.

## Worsening Refugee Situation

Eviction of the Burmese minorities continues to go on unabated. This has given rise to a situation which is at once tragic and delicate. Those who have run away from their homes in Burma under compelling and extremely trying circumstances have been narrating harrowing tales of torture and suffering. The conditions under which these unfortunate people have been forced to take shelter in a neighbouring country across the border are so moving, their faces so painfully reduced to expressions of utter helplessness, their hearts full of such agony that it is humanly impossible to shut one's eyes on them or to ignore them and refuse them basic minimum requirements of life which they now so badly need for the purpose of mere survival. It is these humanitarian considerations which have moved the hearts in Bangladesh. Government has commissioned its relevant machinery to provide as much help to these people as is possible for it to master. There is a growing movement among the people for a solution of their problems and for their return home. The conscience of Bangladesh has been aroused, and this inevitably would have its impact on the conscience of the world at large.

A spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while commenting on the situation on Saturday last in Dacca, has put the figure of the evicted Burmese who have so far taken shelter in Bangladesh at an estimated number of seventy thousand. This number is swelling everyday. The spokesman observed with regret that this large scale eviction of the Burmese minorities has resulted in the development of a situation of great strain in the relations between the two coun-

tries. This must, by all standards, be considered as most unfortunate, especially in view of the firm desire of Bangladesh to maintain relations of friendship and co-operation with all countries of the world, particularly the neighbours. Bangladesh has always held the view that the internal affairs of a country are not a matter of concern of any other country, and Bangladesh continues to clearly and substantially subscribe to this view. But pursuance of such a policy does not give Bangladesh—and for that matter, any other country—a right to sit idle as a silent spectator in the face of untold human miseries. It is in a spirit of true friendship and co-operation that Bangladesh has made attempts to draw the attention of the Burmese authorities to this human problem. As soon as the present situation started developing, a special envoy of President Ziaur Rahman visited Burma with the explicit mission of seeking a solution to the problem on the basis of negotiations. Bangladesh had also availed herself of the opportunity provided by the visit of the Burmese Foreign Minister to Dacca to register its strong and unqualified protest and to request him to take appropriate measures to have the atrocities and the eviction process stopped. The spokesman indicated the failure of the Burmese government to respond and stop the eviction operation in spite of the clear assurances given by its Foreign Minister.

The spokesman disclosed that two concrete proposals were made by Bangladesh during the visit of the Burmese Foreign Minister. The first was an immediate suspension of the eviction operation and the second an enforcement of

the border ground rules between the two countries. The situation has however deteriorated to such an extent since the visit of the Burmese Foreign Minister that no progress could be made in the negotiations between the two countries. Latest reports indicate that the Burmese authorities now plan to establish settlements on the homesteads of the evicted Rohingyas and to have other Burmese nationals installed there with the clear objective of depriving these poor people of their ancestral homes for ever. This is truly disturbing and is yet another evidence of the hard and inhuman policies being followed by the Bur-

mese government. Bangladesh has been providing shelter and other basic requirements of life to the evictees purely on humanitarian considerations, and it is determined to continue its efforts of sending the evicted Burmese nationals back to their homes. These efforts will be met with increasing difficulties if the Burmese authorities continue to follow their policy of having new settlements. It is time for all right thinking people around the world to register their protests and to come forward to help these poor people and ensure their safe return home.

দুই বাংলাদেশ জবজবায়তান

DACCA, MONDAY, MAY 8, 1978

The BANGLADESH OBSERVER



Representatives of UN missions in Bangladesh headed by Mr. Bernard Zagorin, Chief of UNDP visited a number of Burmese refugees camp in Cox's Bazar area on May 6 and 7. Photograph shows Mr. Zagorin interviewing refugees in a camp and checking registration certificates issued by the Burmese authorities. —PID Photo

# OUR VOICE

A MOUTH-PIECE OF THE ROHINGYA PATRIOTIC FRONT

VOL-1

May 11, 1978

NO. 10

## WE MUST LIVE ON OUR OWN SOIL IN ARAKAN

Nothing is left by now, to be made known to the world as to why and how the unscrupulous Ruling Junta at Rangoon is persistingly carrying out the most abominable Nazi-like policy of exterminating the residue Rohingya population of 10,00,000 from Arakan which has been their centuries-old ancestral land, on the vague, mandacious, imaginary and concocted allegation of their being illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, flagrantly contrary to the norms of International Law. The Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) representing 1.5 million of our suffering souls have taken a blood vow to die, on our own soil in Arakan, in resisting the overt and covert genocidal acts of Gen. Ne Win's racist Government. Let his Government read the writting on the world in time for much water has flown down the Kaladan river.

We the sentinel of the RPF, composed of thousands of die-hards from amongst the oppressed, repressed, snubbed and evicted Rohingyas, will leave no stone unturned, in achieving our complete emancipation. We have, indeed, no words today to express to the lovers of peace, enemies of genocide and apartheid, our heart-felt gratitude for upholding our genuine cause and rendering timely all-out assistance to our forcibly evicted people of about 1,30,000 so far.

Eventually, in the name of humanity and justice our foremost appeal at this crucial hour to the Muslim World, the UNO and its Agencies, the Third World Bodies, non-Allined Countries, Public Organisations and capable individuals to render us all possible assistance rather than bear the burden of indefinitely feeding such a bulk of foreign ethnic race, for "rebellion against tyranny is obedience to God".

May the civilised world know that our outcry is for calling an immediate halt of genocide in Arakan and safe return of our evictees to our original homes - to be followed by true despensation of justice in respect of numerous other wrongs and injustices barbarously perpetrated against our people under premeditated sinister designs.

May it as well be painfully said that "Humanity has gone amok in Arakan".

ROHINGYA PATRIOTIC FRONT  
ARAKAN (Burma).



"AT LAST,

THE UGLY TRUTH IS OUT"

Though U No Win's government wanted to suppress and cover up the news of Burmese citizens from Arakan fleeing into Bangladesh in tens of thousands, circumstances this time were against them. They were unable to stop the news from reaching the world press. Before they could do anything international press and leading world broadcasting services were discussing about this serious matter. This happened because a foreign country namely Bangladesh was involved in the affair. And Bangladesh was dissatisfied about this matter as their muslim neighbours in Burmese-Bangladesh border were being killed, raped, beaten up and harassed in many ways. The number of muslim Arakanese people who fled to Bangladesh from Arakan state in Burma up to this moment were reported to be over one hundred thousand. These people fled into Bangladesh in the months of March April and May.

In exposing the extremely unpopular government of one party dictatorship of U No Win, we consistently pointed out that the armed forces of U No Win have committed a series of atrocities, killings, beatings, lootings and arson against people of Burma in all parts of the country. Yet U No Win and Burmese Way to Socialism Party shamelessly called their armed forces "The Peoples' Army". The armed forces of U No Win started killing, bullying and arresting the people. The moment they came to power in 1962. Relentlessly they continued their aggression against the people up to the present moment, inevitably swelling rebel ranks in every part of the country.

Also a well known fact that muslims played a very important role in Burma's independence struggle. Today, under U No Win they are treated as aliens or second class citizens. They are ill treated in various ways. Most important of all, their religious beliefs and rights are restricted, ignored and outraged. Pilgrimage to Holy Mecca for muslims is a privilege of the past. It is now like an unreachable distant dream. Can U No Win's government deny all these facts?

Along the Bangladesh-Burmese border in Arakan, a very large muslim population resided for the past over 500 years. Although these muslims lived quite happily before U No Win came to power, they were harassed and molested continuously and severely since 1963. Thus there had been rebellions of various Arakanese and other sections are also up in arms resisting U No Win's dictatorship. We foresee that there will be more serious uprisings in Arakan State. The tense situation on the Bangladesh-Burmese border will add more fuel to the present crisis.

Although the whole country knows about the behaviour of the Burmese armed forces, U No Win and the Burmese Way to Socialism had somehow or other managed to keep the atrocities committed by the Burmese armed forces from reaching the outside world. His favourite ploy is to feed the world press occasionally about Burmese armed forces fighting Burmese communists, rather exaggeratedly. Also, he makes great claims that his armed forces are achieving great results in narcotic suppression. Foreigners and foreign countries who lacked background knowledge about Burma were gullible to U No Win's tricks and propaganda. Although we had been trying to inform the outside world that Burma under U No Win and Burmese Way to Socialism Party enjoy no democratic privileges and that human rights and freedom had been trampled upon most ruthlessly, many foreign news and foreign countries are not capable of summing up the true situation in Burma clearly or realistically. Perhaps many of them are only interested in making friends with the people in power. They are types of people who do not care how a government in power governs or treats its people.

On 30th April 1978, U No Win government issued a lengthy but a lame announcement in connection with the mass exodus of muslim Arakanese from Burma to Bangladesh. The government announcement said that this matter took place as routine immigration checks were being made on the bordering areas. It is also said, that these matters took place on account of the machinations of some wicked elements on the border. Here, we would like to ask U No Win about his troops which committed large scale killings, atrocities, rapes and arson in these places. At long last, the truth about U No Win's armed forces had been exposed very glaringly this time to the outside world. Below we include a news cutting that appeared in Bangkok Post on 28th April, 1st and 6th May 1978.

Here and now we would like to predict more. However much U No Win and the Burmese Way to Socialism Party may try to suppress news about lack of human rights and freedom, democratic privileges and the severe oppression they have perpetrated in Burma from reaching the world, time is close at hand when matters will suddenly burst asunder in Burma. Time is ripening fast. A dictatorship which rules a country against the will and wish of overwhelming majority of the people must inevitably fall. Democracy and freedom will finally prevail in Burma.

Whatever was anybody's opinion in the past, the recent happening in Arakan along Bangladesh's borders, which compelled thousands of muslim Burmese people to leave their homes to take refuge in a foreign country should be an eye opener. Burma, mainly a buddhist country has a total muslim population of over six million. Before U No Win came to power in 1962, the muslim community in Burma was a happy lot. Their contribution towards the well-being of the country in every respect was always considered a great factor. It is

BANGKOK POST FRIDAY APRIL 28, 1978

Refugees from Burma flee to Bangladesh

OVER 30,000 Burmese nationals evicted from their homes have crossed the border and entered into southern districts of Bangladesh during the last few days carrying heavy loads of furniture, tape, arms and food, reports published here yesterday said. Reports quoting witnesses said the Burmese army personnel fired upon them on Sunday killing one 100 and taking injuries to several hundred. The refugees yesterday for the first time visited different parts of the refugee and established a network of propaganda along streams of exiles.

BANGKOK POST MONDAY MAY 1, 1978

15,000 more Burmese flee

DAKKA (Reuters) ANOTHER 15,000 Burmese Muslims fleeing along army brutality crossed into Bangladesh Sunday. Despite brutal atrocities in Arakan, the 150 mile border, official parties here said, with 10,000 Burmese, the sources said 45,000 refugees from media and Burma were now in Bangladesh.

BANGKOK POST SATURDAY MAY 6, 1978

Refugees worry B'desh

DAKKA (Reuters) BANGLADESH yesterday called on Burma to repatriate thousands of Muslims who have fled across the border in the last three weeks to escape alleged brutality by the Burmese Army. A spokesman for the Bangladesh Foreign Office said their return to their homeland was the

"best solution to a vast humanitarian problem" created by the influx. The number of Burmese refugees in various border relief camps in Bangladesh has now soared to 45,000 according to official figures released yesterday. "If this flow continues, it will be absurd to think that our relations with Burma are still friendly and normal," the spokesman said. He said a Bangladesh delegation was awaiting word from the Burmese government before visiting Bangkok to discuss the problems.

BANGKOK POST FRIDAY APRIL 28, 1978

Bangladesh warns Burma

Bangladesh on 5th May 1978, requested Burma to take back tens of thousands of muslim refugees who fled from Arakan State in Burma, into Bangladesh in March, April and May 1978. Bangladesh government officials stated that all these people should be taken back on social and humanitarian grounds. The total number of refugees are said to be over one hundred thousand.

Announcements made by U No Win government (which really never reveals more than 10% of actual happenings on all occasions), it is obvious that Burma-Bangladesh area is in great confusion. According to the announcements made on 6th May 1978 by Burmese government radio, it was said that various bands of armed rebels and Arakanese muslims were roaming the border areas committing all sorts of crimes. There is now complete lack of law and order in the border areas. Also, it was stated at the same time that Bangladesh border forces fired upon the Burmese armed forces for not less than three times.

These officials also warned that if the Burmese government refused to comply with their request, relations between Bangladesh and Burma can be damaged.

On 12th May 1978, Bangladesh government sent a strong protest note for ill treating muslims from Burma to the Burmese government.

Meanwhile, situation in the entire Burmese-Bangladesh border area deteriorated day after day. Even by the 4th



AR-TUIT (THE NEW FORCE)

May 1978

## Crime Against Humanity

The reign of terror let loose by certain sections of Burmese nationals in collusion with Burmese officials, civil and armed forces against their own compatriots belonging to a particular ethnic and religious minority in the Burmese territory of Arakan, cannot but arouse a deep sense of indignation and condemnation in Bangladesh and elsewhere. This helpless particular minority group are victims of criminal acts that include murder, torture, rape, molestation of women, forcibly taking away of adult members of their families, arson and loot. The ruthless hands are perpetrating inhuman treatment and atrocities on these unfortunates in their own native land. The repressive measures have compelled these Burmese nationals to leave their hearth and home and cross the international frontier and enter Bangladesh territory to save their lives and honour. By now more than 100,000 of these victims consisting a large number of old men, women and children have entered our land. A good many of them carry gunshot wounds on their persons. Reports from the Bangladesh-Burmese border areas relate the most heart-rending stories of victimisation of these Burmese nationals.

The influx of these victims has created an acute problem for us. It is the human consideration that has obliged the Bangladesh government to provide these refugees with shelter and basic needs. And in so doing, we have been burdened with an extremely severe economic strain. It is the responsibility of the Burmese government to meet their needs. Weeks have passed. But the Burmese would not desist from the inhuman measures responsible for the exodus of Burmese nationals to Bangladesh. The

Bangladesh government has taken various steps, including the despatch of a special envoy, to settle the problem through peaceful negotiations. But in vain. The Burmese authorities have not as yet made any positive response. The atrocities are still being perpetrated on these Burmese nationals.

Their influx is continuing to increase day in and day out, giving rise to serious tension in the Bangladesh-Burma border areas and feelings of extreme concern and resentment among the Bangladeshis. The situation resulting from the Burmese action is deteriorating fast, creating the gravest concern and anxiety for us. The Bangladesh government has aptly lodged a strong protest with its Burmese counterpart against the repressive measures launched by them for forcible expulsion of these Burmese nationals. The Burmese government must fully realize the gravity of the situation and make positive response to Bangladesh's urge to stop inhuman action and take urgent and appropriate measures for immediate repatriation of these Burmese nationals to their homes—in the interest of good neighbourly relations and maintenance of peace in the border.

Meanwhile, as Presidential Adviser, Prof. Shamsul Haq, has said in his cable to the UN Secretary General, Dr. Kurt Waldheim, the Burmese inhuman action has imposed 'an intolerable burden on the meagre resources of Bangladesh and there is an acute shortage of necessary provisions, including medical and transport facilities', to tackle the refugee problem. It is a human problem. The pitiable condition of these Burmese refugees can hardly be described in human language. We urge the world body and in-

Contd.: "Crime against Humanity" <sup>51</sup>

ternational agencies to provide us with all possible assistance to cope with this alarming situation. The Burmese action is a grave violation of human rights and internationally recognised obligation of all governments to extend full protection to ethnic minorities. It has, to be precise, totally

violated the UN charter. These ethnic minority people are bona-fide Burmese nationals, born and brought up in Burma. Their forcible expulsion from their own hearth and home is a crime against humanity. It goes against human norms. It deserves to be condemned the world over.

THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER

DACCA SUNDAY MAY 14 1978

OIC 1978

# Gaye urges world pressure against Burmese action

Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye has appealed to the Muslim world to strongly denounce the atrocities, of the Burmese Government on its Muslim minority and apply all means to end the inhuman actions, reports ENA. In a statement received in Dacca on Tuesday the Secretary-General expressed his deep shock at the deplorable condition of the Burmese Muslims and appealed to the Muslim world to offer all necessary assistance to them. While denouncing the Burmese atrocities, he also drew attention of the world community and called upon it to make the Burmese authorities desist from its inhuman policies. The statement said, "I am deeply worried and anguished at the deplorable news about the destiny of the Muslim community in Burma. The horrors and sufferings the Muslims in Burma are currently undergoing have been evidenced by various reliable sources. For more than six weeks, the Muslim community in Bur-

ma has been facing the hazards of persecution, murder and displacement from home by the military authorities there. The persecution of children, women and aged men are incredible. The news confirmed by reliable sources ever since the tragedy of the Burma Muslims and the influx of refugees to the People's Republic of Bangladesh continued due to acts of aggression and sequestration of Muslim property by the authorities in Burma that tens of thousands of women, aged and disabled lead a miserable life in the barracks of Bangladesh and neighbouring countries of Bangladesh where they suffer from hunger and epidemics. The actions committed by the Government of Burma against its Muslim nationals clearly shows the fanatic objectives which negate the basic human rights and as such do not become a responsible authority which respects the rights of one of its communities. I draw world attention to the tragic situation of that community and call on it to bring the Burmese authorities to desist from its inhuman policies and appeal to the Muslim world to strongly denounce these acts and to apply all means to end them and to offer all necessary assistance to their brothers."

June 24 1978

SOURCE: THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER

PROCLAMATION ON MUSLIM EVICTION

We, the Representatives of the peoples of Kachin, Karen, Pa-O, Palaung, Lahu, Shan and Wa, in deep sorrow, hereby express our heart-felt sympathy to the defenceless Muslims who fled to escape the compound racial and religious persecution by the Rangoon Government armed forces, such tragic injustice connived by the barbaric of Rangoon Government could only be performed by the inhuman armed force who for years have been continuously ingrained in the practice of performing endless atrocity.

To the world, to all Nations and to all men we hereby proclaim our determination with a singleness of will to continue and fight to victory against the Rangoon Government and the Burmese Socialist Programme Party who are dominated by the barbaric Burmese. We have struggled and fought against the Burmans for some thirty years. Though we lost thousands of Patriots, we still continue the fight time and again our resources are exhausted and yet the flow of our fighting soul has not diminished.

The reason we want to free ourselves from the yoke of the Burmese dominations is that, we want to build our own Independent Sovereign States where all people regardless of race, religion or sex are free to enjoy political, economical, social, cultural and religious freedom and equal rights.

We, for the past thirty years, with no aid of any nature from any nation, fought jointly or separately, against the Burmese Government of the then U Nu and now Ne Win, to liberate all people from all walk of life from the evils derived from the processing of Burmese machinery of Burmanisation.

Those Muslims, more than 85,000 in number, who fled to Bangladesh to escape rape, looting and physical assault from the Burmese troops are in genuine distress, is now our concern, and that of all freedom loving muslims as well. The Ommat Liberation Front (Burma) which represents over 4 millions of muslims in Burma, and as a Chapter Member of this Alliance, has recently appealed to the Muslim Devouts, through the Muslim World League and the World Muslim Congress, to devote and pray to Allah the Almighty to bestow Gracious Blessing unto these distressed Muslims in Bangladesh border.

The one particularity that the Muslims of Burma are looked down by Buddhist Burmans is, that while 95% are the decendants of the Semitic-Arian Race and the rest are from the Tihetan-Mongoloid like

the rest of the other nationalities in Burma. These people though they have settled down for generation and regeneration in centuries, the dissimilarity in racial origin and features have failed to erase the racial dis-harmony the Burmans have practiced over them as aliens.

Here in the jungles, we work together with our brother Muslims who have been denied of all political, economical, and social freedom.

The Western Powers have neglected us and left us as pawns between the Red China and the Maffia who up to this date created political chaos, uncertainty.

We beseech to all the governments of the Islamic Nations to see to the plight of the 4 millions Muslims in Burma and to help them live peacefully with dignity.

We propose that the leaders of Muslim Nations assume the responsibility for the administration of relief welfare with measures on the principle that the interests of these people is paramount, and to accept as a sacred trust, the obligation to promote to the utmost, the well being of our people who have been reduced to the status of inhuman condition by the savage and covert plan of Burmanisation.

The Ommat Liberation Front, together with every one of us, now approach the leaders of the Islamic Nations, the champions of Muslims cause, to kindly focus your brotherly benevolence and shower onto us material and monetary aid which we extremely need.

We appeal Muslim Nations to hasten your help so that we could be in a position to contain the Burmese racist movement which if not checked, intime the machine of Burmanisation would consequently be able to suffocate all insufferable groans from the suppressed people who in hunger and diseaded, can yet pass their days in agonies, frustration and terror.

We shall appreciate and be grateful if Muslim Nations shall deem it as a humanitarian favour to delegate a fact finding team to work in collaboration with us.

We implore Muslim Nations to join us to topple the tyrannical barbarian regime of Rangoon. Your co-operation and financial aids will help us win this war of liberty for all.

May, 17, 1978

ATTEST:-

OMMAT LIBERATION FRONT (BURMA)  
 KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY ✓  
 ALL KAREN INDEPENDENCE ORGANISATION (DELTA) ✓  
 PA-O NATIONAL ORGANISATION ✓  
 PALAUNG STATE LIBERATION ORGANISATION ✓  
 SHAN STATE PROGRESS PARTY ✓  
 LAHU NATIONAL UNITED PARTY ✓  
 WA NATIONAL ARMY. ✓

## Disturbance on the border of peace

By Daud Majlis

Dacca: During his recent visit here, the Burmese Foreign Minister Brigadier-General Myint Maung described his country's border with Bangladesh as "a border of peace." One week after he returned home, the border became a symbol of woe for thousands of Burmese Muslims who were evicted from their homes in Arakan province and pushed into Bangladesh.

At the time of writing more than 70,000 Burmese nationals had crossed to Bangladesh seeking sanctuary from what they allege is "inhuman torture, atrocities and systematic persecution" by the Burmese authorities. According to one estimate more than 50,000 evicted Burmese nationals are still living in the jungles along the border trying to get into Bangladesh.

Some of the refugees who have taken shelter in Bangladesh fear that the Burmese authorities are trying to evict virtually all the 1.2 million Muslims from Arakan. Rangoon considers them foreigners, while Bangladesh does not accept them as its nationals.

Rohingya, as the Burmese Muslims in Arakan are known, have lived in Burma for periods ranging from three generations to over three centuries. Some of their forbears went to Burma from what is now Bangladesh's eastern district of Chittagong, but over the years they lost contact with their original homeland. They have neither relations nor friends in this country. Most do not even speak the language.

The evicted Burmese Muslims continue to pour into Bangladesh in an unending stream, haunted by the memory of their horrifying experience and exhausted by the perilous trek to safety. All tell the same tale: armed Burmese soldiers came in hordes to their area, singled out the women for rape and the young men for murder.

Officially six camps have been established for the refugees. But they also set up camps on their own initiative as they reach Bangladesh. They are all strangely silent, speaking only when directly questioned. In one camp, this correspondent met Sultan Ahmed, who last year harvested about 1,000 tons of rice from his own land. He crossed to Bangladesh with about 80 members of his family. At 75 he is now a pauper. He says his 30-year-old son, Shamsul Alam, was kidnapped and murdered by Burmese soldiers.

Mariam Khatun Khatun, 32, came with her three children because "the brutes killed my husband." Like most of the latest wave of refugees, she comes from Butthodong district.

## THE EXODUS REVERSED



Most of those being thrown out are small traders and businessmen. They also have a little land. Very few are really rich, but they dominate Arakan's economic life. The clash between the original Burmese and the Arakan Rohingya is mainly economic: the natives want to take over what the Rohingya built up over the centuries.

Action to evict the Rohingya from Arakan began in 1942 when nearly 400,000 Muslims were thrown out of Burma. About 200,000 have gone to Pakistan, some to the Middle East and Canada. The remainder live in Bangladesh.

When the Burmese Government introduced identity cards for its citizens, the Rohingya Muslims were refused national registration cards (NRC). Instead they were offered foreigners registration cards (FRC). But they refused to accept them and demanded NRCs since they were genuine Burmese nationals. The result was that most received no card at all.

The few who were issued NRCs had to surrender them a year ago, because the authorities wanted the cards "in connection with a survey," and never got them back. Now the non-cardholders are being permitted as infiltrators from Bangladesh. According to one estimate more than 6,000 such "infiltrators" languish in Burmese jails.

Early in April the Bangladesh presidential adviser, Kazi Anwarul Haq, went to Rangoon to initiate negotiations, which continued when the Burmese Foreign Minister came to Dacca in mid-April. The negotiations were inconclu-

sive, but were due to be resumed in Rangoon. Before this happened, however, it is alleged that the Burmese authorities unleashed a campaign of terror against the Arakan Muslims in a unilateral bid to solve what they now describe as their "minority problem."

Denzil Peiris writes: Observers noting the reverse flow of refugees from Burma into Bangladesh would have been reminded of an Asian saying: "Saturn [the god of misfortune] has dropped on to the beggar's bowl." Undoubtedly, the "international basket case," as Bangladesh was dubbed by former United States secretary of state Henry Kissinger during the 1971 liberation war, could not take on the extra burden of feeding and sheltering these refugees.

Burma's Ministry of Home Affairs said the Government was implementing a project for the systematic scrutiny of people residing in the State for classification of citizens and foreigners according to the law and for exposing and taking action against foreigners who have entered the country illegally.

Indeed, the Burmese Government said that other races besides the Bengalis had been "scrutinised." After inspections from December 13-31 last year, action had been taken against 174 Chinese under the Registration of Foreigners Act. Others at the receiving end of the searches included Nepalese, Pakistanis and Indians.

Burma claims that during one of these operations towards the end of April, "because of agitation by unscrupulous persons and because they were unable to produce bona fide registration certificates, about 19,457 Bengalis abandoned their homes and absconded."

While Burma blamed the Bengalis for their exodus and denied allegations of racial discrimination, it is possible that some officials engaged in the searches may have been caught up in the atmosphere of resentment against immigrants.

Colonial rule in Asia — whether French or British — has left several time bombs in the form of race tension. A feature of alien rule was the importation of indentured labour, traders and minor officials to the colonies. Some foreign Asian traders functioned as usurious moneylenders, and merchants to whom peasants were forced to sell crops at exploitative prices to settle loans.

Growing rich through these deals, some immigrants became rural landowners. The crops they harvested included implacable resentment against themselves.

This latest exodus could have been partly spurred by impoverished Burmese peasants seeing an opportunity to grab some of the property and other possessions of the alien Bengalis.

## Burma

# OPERATION DRAGON AGAINST THE MUSLIMS IN BURMA

Excerpts from  
"GENOCIDE IN  
BURMA AGAINST  
THE MUSLIMS  
OF ARAKAN"  
a brochure  
published by  
Rohingya  
Patriotic Front,



The on-going extermination operation of a very severe nature known as the NAGA MIN (Dragon Operation) has been launched in Arakan in order to annihilate the remaining Muslims population of the region. This merciless atrocious operation has been going on since February, 1978 under special supervision of Deputy Home Minister U Khin Maung Ti directed by the Fascist Government of General No Win.

On the day of Feb. 6, 1978 a number of 250 well armed Immigration officials arrived at Akyab from Rangoon. They started the Dragon Operation at Akyab Town and its suburban area on the 11th. Feb, '78 with the active collaboration of a large number of heavily armed forces from Burma Army, Burma Navy and Police department together with the members from civil administration department and the Magh members of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). During the course of raid they encircled and blocked the Muslim Quarters and villages at dawn (the prayer time for Muslims) and made house to house searches. They started harassing and arresting lots of innocent Rohingyas under the false and wanton allegations that they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. So far over 5000 Rohingyas (men, women, oldmen, children and pregnant women) were arrested. They were kicked, beaten and persecuted. Finally, they were taken away to the concentration camps. The condition of these concentration camps are considered worse than solitary confinement. None of them are supplied adequate food and other necessities of life. No relative and friends are allowed to visit them. Many of them are dying of hunger, malnutrition and lack of medical care.

On 17th Feb., 78 about 400 women herded like animals in the army trucks were taken to and fro between concentration camps and the Akyab

Central Jail. The boastly Immigration officials and the police constables were so rough and merciless in treating with the women folk that thousands of Rohingyas of the areas naturally got provoked and turned out for a demonstration calling for the immediate release of the innocent Rohingyas and stoppage of the Dragon Operation. But the police and army opened indiscriminate gun firing at the demonstrators killing 4 of the peaceful demonstrators and injuring others seriously. Subsequently, the police and the army arrested many Muslims prominent persons and the students on the suspicion of being the instigators of the demonstration. Some of them were killed due to brutal beating. Among those who were arrested is a very famous Muslim preacher namely Maulana Abdul Monaf of Kawardull (Ambari village tracts, Akyab. He was arrested at midnight from his home and was tortured inhumanly. He was beaten by gun bullets, his hand were plucked and burned as a result of which he succumbed to death due to his injuries on Feb 27.

### On 18th February, 78

the mobile court had imprisoned over two thousand Rohingyas in jails under so-called Immigration Act 6 (2); National Registration Act 13 (1), and Foreigners Registration Act 5 (1) They are still in the concentration camps. There are many instances whose parents are considered to be the citizens of Burma, but their children are condemned to be aliens. Something so puzzling to simple common sense. This is the way how laws of the jungles are practised in Burma today.

### On 20th February, 78

a meeting was held in the Arakan State Hall, Akyab where Western Command Commander Col. Min Quang, and Chairman of the Arakan State Major Kyaw Maung (Magh) had delivered speeches on the operation. They openly threatened the Rohingyas that they will take serious action, if necessary will pass death sentence, if any Rohingya is found to be standing against the interest of the Dragon Operation.

**On 21st Feb., 78** news was obtained that most of the women (approximately 500) in the concentration camps were very harshly interrogated, helplessly beaten and were subjected to rape. It is heart breaking to report that majority of our mothers and sisters (90% of them) were raped by the chauvinist policemen, immigration personnel, and the Burma militarymen. Even some of the young girls were taken away from the concentration camps. They are still missing.

It should not be out of point to mention here that the women and men including their children are kept in the same room without giving any facility of bath, washing, latrine, drinking and sleeping since their arrest. It is also known that the authorities are poisoning the food deliberately to the prisoners in the concentration camps. Upto the end of February nearly 30 Rohingyas died of starvation, rape, torture, murder etc. The authorities even did not allow dead bodies to be taken away by their relatives for burial. One

can imagine the Nazlika atrocities are being committed to our Rohingyas people in the concentration camps.

**On 1st March, 78** a group of operation party went to Myobon township of Kyauktaw district and arrested over 500 Rohingyas. All of them were thrown into the jails without any legal procedure.

**On 3rd March, 78** the Dragon Operation team went to Kyauktaw township and arrested about 200 Rohingyas. Most of the Rohingyas of the area deserted their hearth and home in fear of rape and heinous atrocities committed by both the government officials as well as the local Maghs.

**On 5th March, 78** an advance group of Burma Army under the command of Major Sein Min was posted to Buthidaung and Maungdaw area as an auxiliary force for helping the Dragon Operation. This group of army directed a terror of rapes, murders, and lootings upon the Rohingyas in the Buthidaung area.

**On 9th March, 78** daughters and wives of many prominent Rohingyas of Buthidaung township were brutally raped by the army-men. There were also many such instances and evidences of inhuman crimes committed to lesser known people.

**On 10th March, 78** the Burmese Army entered Tharathkannu and Darbruchaung villages, a couple of miles away from Buthidaung town, and raped many young girls and looted the villagers.

**On 15th March, 78** 4 Burma Naval gun-boats arrived at Buthidaung from Akyab. These gun-boats brought 200 immigration officials including some of senior officers such as Major Sein Min, Captain San Sein, Immigration officer Paw Zau, Peoples' Judge Aung Sein Tun and Inspection officer Kyaw Tha Nu.

**On 16th March, 78** at Buthidaung early in the morning, the immigration personnel started house to house inquiry and arrested more than 300 Rohingyas including

*Bullet Injuries*

*Victims of rape*





some 60 young girls, some of them were high school students. The daughter of retired sub-inspector of police Abdur Rahim, the daughter and sister of Abdus Samad, the daughter of A. Bashir (school teacher) are among those who were molested inhumanly by the Burma Army, Immigration personnel and local Maghs. Judges of the mobile courts composed of immigration officials, Socialist Programme Party members (local Maghs) and other local authorities had sentenced more than 30 young girls to imprisonment on false allegations that they are aliens. They kept them in their offices all night and victimized them to rape and other cruelties.

**On 17th March, 78**  
about 100 imprisoned Rohingya girls were transported from Buthidaung to the Maungdaw jail. On the same day it was reported that one young girl Kabla (18 years old) was inhumanly raped by about 20 jail policemen of the Akyab Central Jail and died after some hours later.

*A Rohingya mother gave birth to a child*



**On 18th March, 78**  
thousands of Rohingyas from Kyauktaw, Akyab, Ruthedaung, Myebon, Buthidaung etc. continued to run away to safer places. Most of them reached Maungnema, Wabag, Kwardall (Gynganbrun), Pranpu (Minglagel), Hatimara (Sunthaybrun) etc. etc. villages of Maungdaw on their way to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

**On 19th March, 78**  
5 women of No. 2 Western Quarters Buthidaung, who escaped into hiding in fear of rape were discovered by the Army. They were taken to the military camp where they were dishonoured and raped.

On that day the Burma Army raped wife of Samiuddin, daughter of Abdul Aziz, and killed her at the Nakyindauk Pass. They also looted 17 refugee families who were crossing the Mayu Mountain ranges.

**On 20th March, 78**  
the Dragon Operation team went to a famous village called Nyoungchawug

south of Buthidaung and launched their criminal atrocities and a class was taken place between the operation party and the villagers. As a result 3 innocent Rohingyas were shot to death.

On the same day an oldman who was fleeing with his young girl along the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road was attacked by 7 local Maghs, and they carried away his daughter forcibly. The young girl was raped and killed by them.

**On 21st March, 78**  
the operation team went to Nywedauung (Moldaung) village where they looted and tortured the villagers. So, most of the villagers went to the hill side to cross over the Mayu mountain ranges but the Burma army followed and captured 50 of them. They were tortured barbarously and detained them in the Buthidaung jail.

The nationalist Maghs were in full partnership in looting the Rohingya villages specially for rice, paddy and other livestock.

**On 24th March, 78**  
a meeting was held at the Maungdaw Cinema Hall where the Maungdaw Party Unit General Secretary Kyaw Aye presided over the meeting. He strongly wanted the people of the area not to help those Rohingyas who ran away from their villages.

**On 25th March, 78**  
Captain Zaw Win (Magh), from the Pakira Bazar (Thamantha) camp, arrested many renowned Muslim religious preachers in Maungdaw.

1. Maulana Noman S/o Maulana Motlur Rahman (35 years old), Hatimara village,
2. Maulana Mubarak S/o Darbesh All (35 years old), Hatimara village,
3. Maulana Zafar S/o Darbesh All (30 years old), Hatimara village,
4. Ameer Dil Mohammed S/o Sawkit (34 years old), Hatimara village.

This beastly Army officer tortured all the Maulanas very inhumanly on allegation that they have been giving food and shelter to the refugees who came over from Buthidaung side.

On the same allegation the ex-headman Sultan Ahmed of Dudaun village and Haji Sultan of Fokirapara (Krarubran) were also arrested and beaten mercilessly. Later they were taken to the Maungdaw jail.

## Relief Needs For Burmese Refugees

We gratefully commend the relief operation that have been so expeditiously organised and are being conducted by the UN Agencies as a major source of relief for the refugees from Burma. In the absence of a solution of this problem through initiative from the Burmese government—and that could be chiefly through repatriation of these bonafide citizens to their own country—the only thing that can be done is to do all we can to help the refugees in their camps survive disease, decay and death.

With refugees still flowing in across the border at the rate of several thousands a day the resultant human exodus is one of the most touching in modern history. And the lack of reaction and response to pleas from the affected country to the Burmese government—with the reports of intensified drive in Burma pushing this ethnic and religious minority across the border into Bangladesh—is bound to have compounded the problem and accentuated the tragedy. Locally Bangladesh has been doing its best to provide relief to these in distress. And we note with extreme satisfaction that our appeal has elicited a quick and sizable response from the outside world—particularly from UN humanitarian and relief agencies. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Dr. Barnard Zagorin's Thursday Press Conference in Dacca shows the extent of humanitarian concern felt by the relevant UN agencies about the problems and of the relief in cash and kind

that is being organised for the succour of these uprooted humans. We express our gratitude individually to every agency or country that has come forward with relief and help for the Burmese refugees.

Quite naturally it will be some time before relief on an adequate scale would get organised. And equally understandably, as reported by Dr. Zagorin, the food supplied to them is yet inadequate; so must be shelter and medical aid. Under circumstances such as these what is reassuring is that although so far about 110 deaths have occurred in the camps, prompt supply of relief in all essential forms would prevent mortality and produce a generally improved conditions at the camps. We repeat our appeal to individual countries—both Muslim and others—for relief in cash and kind in the background of the UNHCR six-month programme of relief for the refugees. We also appeal to the international community and the member states of the UN to bring pressure to bear upon the Burmese government to speedily put an end to such an exodus of its bonafide citizens and to have the refugees safely return home. The issue fundamentally is one of the legitimate right to security and existence that any ethnical or religious minority should be given in any country. For, unless a solution is pressed and found in these legal terms and the Burmese government is made to see reason the open-endedness of the problem would only aggravate the misery and tragedy.



## BURMESE MUSLIMS

Reports of mass exodus, wanton killings and cruelties perpetuated on the 3 million Muslims in Burma are tragic. It is a challenge to the conscience of humanity and a serious occasion for soul-searching. Why should the human blood be so cheap; why should the peace of the innocent not be protected! Loud votaries of human rights and high ideals of the United Nations Charter; exponents of social justice and fighters against imperialism and neo-colonialism must now act to stop the blood bath of poor victims. This is an appeal in the name of humanity, to the dignity of man; to human brotherhood and the comity of nations - to all irrespective of their political and religious orientations.

The extent of reported persecution and deprivations that the Burmese Muslims are subjected to, is somewhat comparable to what the Muslims in the Philippines, Thailand, India, to mention only a few, receive from their respective governments. Latest figures indicate that about 100 thousand Muslims in Arakan were either killed or fled to Bangladesh since the de-Islamization campaign was launched by the Military regime of Burma. Muslim institutions and properties were reported to be either burned or plundered.

The Muslims in Arakan known as Rohingyas are the direct progeny of the early Muslim settlers of the land inhabiting the area, as an

ethnic race. They lived for centuries with the Maghs of Burma in perfect peace and amity until the year 1942 when at the heinous instigation of the Buddhist Nationalists, hundreds of Rohingya settlements were devastated and about 80,000 of unarmed and peaceful Rohingyas were savagely massacred. Since then it becomes the regular phenomenon of the Burmese Government to let loose their acts of genocide on the Burmese Muslims. The Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma has recently started Dragon operation on the Arakanese Muslims just on the eve of Presidential election in Bangladesh held on June 3, 1978 and just after the Moscow-oriented coup in Afghanistan in the first week of May, 1978.

Majority-Minority relationships are always sensitive. We have to bear in mind that, like other minorities everywhere, the Muslims in Burma are entitled to protection and security. This is the basic principle of "Social justice" universally acknowledged by all civilized nations to insure the well-being and security of all their population, without distinction of race, color or religion. No portion of the population of any civilized nation can be the victim of government apathy and neglect without doing violence to this benign philosophy.

Without need of further stress, the Muslims in Burma deserve to be assisted in their growth and

development. Religious and cultural barriers should not stand in the way of their development if harmony and solidarity were to be achieved in that country. The greatness of a nation like Burma, in essence, hinges on the cohesiveness and unity of its people. It cannot succeed with its population segmented into hostile groupings with the minority wallowing in poverty and ignorance; while the others, because of their numerical strength and social position, are reaping all the benefits accruing from the economic wealth of the nation. To strike the balance of harmony requires that the Muslims in Burma be given a sense of belonging, a feeling that they have a future in their own country. This can be done through applying the principles of law and equity, through the exercise of patience and caution, and by the recognition of the sanctity of human rights, the protection of properties as well as educational and religious institutions.

While we address this appeal to the government and people of Burma to exercise their high sense of decency and morality in treating their countrymen judiciously, we ask all the nations of the world and the Muslim countries in particular to perform their inescapable obligations towards the suffering Muslims in Burma. The adoption of the "wait and see" attitude would endanger the peace of mankind. We pray that we all rise to our collective duties towards peace and harmony.

## MUSLIM MINORITY IN BURMA

By Muzammil Haq

The Arakanese are Burmans albeit with an admixture of Indian blood, and their language is a somewhat archaic form of Burmese. From historical evidence it has been established beyond any shadow of doubt that the Burmese Muslims have had their roots in Burma for the last one thousand years. The Muslims of Arakan have a more than 1300-year-old tradition, culture, history and civilization of their own expressed in their shrines, cemeteries, sanctuaries, social and cultural institutions found scattered even today in every nook and corner of the land.

Within 50 years of its advent (i.e. 610-660 A.D.), Islam was first introduced in Arakan during the reign of some Hindu monarchs who preceded the Chandra dynasty (788-957 A.D.). This was the work of the Sufi Mystics and Arab, Moorish and Persian traders.

From the 7th to the 10th centuries the capitals of present Arakan were successively at Waseli, Laungret and a few other cities along the river Lemro when Hinduism and Buddhism prevailed in the region. But sometime after the influx of Muslims a Mongolian invasion took place in Arakan which ended the Chandra dynasty in 957 A.D. The position of the Mongolians was so well established that they were acclaimed as King-makers in Arakan. They did not aspire to set up any kingdom of their own till the momentous year of 1430 A.D. when the deposed Buddhist (Magh) king Naramithla was

restored to the throne of Arakan under the Muslim name of Sulaiman later corrupted into Saman or Saw Mwen. Sulaiman was the first king of this last dynasty of Mrauku. With him there began a new era in the history of Arakan. It took the kings of Arakan a hundred years thereafter to learn the doctrine of Islam. For the next hundred years 1430-1530, Arakan remained very close to Muslim Bengal in history and politics. In 1531 A.D. Zabauk' Shah under the assumed Magh title of Minbin ascended the throne and founded the Mrauku empire which extended upto Moulmein in lower Burma. Persian was the court language of Mrauku from 1430 A.D.

When Zabauk Shah came to the throne (1531-53 A.D.) he turned Mrauku into the strongest fortified city of the Bay. The sudden rise of Arakan into unprecedented importance in the Bay is principally due to its Islamization. Zabauk Shah embellished Mrauku with mosques, pagodas and monuments. The architecture of mosques and monuments was neither Indo-Islamic nor Indian but of a particular type which came to be known as "Bengali Muslim Architecture" of the Muslim Bengal period.

Hundreds of saints and their followers came, in different times, to Bengal and the region now known as Arakan, from Persia and other Muslim lands along the old-established sea route and spread themselves in towns and remote villages. The Astana of Pir Badr al-Din-i-Alam is situated on the coast of the Bay of

Bengal, at Akyab. Local people traditionally call it the Dargah of Badr Mosqum. Alawal and his teacher Dawlat Kazi, the two famous poets of 16th century Bengali Literature were Court-poets of the Arakan Council. It is proved from this fact that Muslims had been living in Arakan from time immemorial. The Magh dialect of Arakan quite different from the Burman dialect of Burma. Persian was retained as Court language until 1836 A.D. By 1885 A.D. the whole of Burma was conquered by the Britshers and in 1937 it was separated from India and it was granted independence in 1948. Arakan achieved statehood on December 15, 1974 under the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma headed by U Ne Win.

The entire present Muslim population of Arakan are the direct progeny of the early Muslim settlers of the land inhabiting the area, as an ethnic race, for the last 1316 years and number about 15,000,000 inclusive of nearly 5,000,000 who emigrated to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, U.A.E, Saudi Arabia, U.K., U.S.A., Singapore and Thailand to escape persecution. Almost all Indians and Pakistanis numbering about 12,000,000 who had come to Burma as immigrants left the country by the year 1942 and a negligible number who stayed on because of their interests in business, industry and immovable property were obliged to leave to the last person by 1964. Hence, there is now no real question of any infiltration of foreign nationals into Burma through any of her

1844

borders and to brand the majority of the indigenous Muslims in Burma now as aliens is nothing short of racism.

The Burmese Muslims were wantonly and ruthlessly persecuted on absolutely false allegations of violations of law: The Burma Immigration (Emergency Provision) Act, 1947; Burma Immigration (Emergency Provision) (Amendment) Act, 1957, and Union Citizenship Act 1948.

The repression and oppression by arbitrary, wrong and illegal application of the Registration of Foreigner's Act, to the natural born Rohingyas citizens, is one of the many examples of the present Union Government's infernal plan to annihilate the Muslim population of Arakan and establish settlements of Buddhists on the usurped lands as was the general case in Cyprus, Mindanao, India, Thailand and Kashmir.

The Rohingyas and Magha through centuries lived together in perfect peace and amity until the year 1942 when, at the heinous instigation of the Buddhist Nationalists, hundreds of Rohingya settlements were devastated and about 80,000 of unarmed and peaceful Rohingyas were savagely massacred. The memory of the gruesome tragedy is still fresh in the minds of the Rohingyas. In the later part of 1948, when the Mujahid Movement against the Burmese Government was in full swing, the Burmese Armed Forces killed and arrested many Muslims, burnt down many of their villages, kidnapped and raped their women. About 33,000 fled the country and took shelter in East Pakistan. (Urdu daily PASBAN, Dacca dated 11/14.5.1955).

During the year of 1949 the Government Forces invariably carried on various kinds of atrocities such as looting, raping, physical torture and arson as a result of which many villages went out of existence and 20,000 Muslims were also pushed into East Pakistan (Urdu daily Kohistan, Lahore, 4.9.1959).

In course of army patrol duties and official tours the Army and Civil personnel burnt down to ashes 3 mosques and hundreds of religious scriptures including the Holy Quran and Hadiths. Even on February, 1955 the Burmese Army desecrated a mosque in Kyaundaung village, (Haji Ismail Mosque) which ultimately was turned into an army camp. (Urdu daily PASBAN, Dacca, 11/14.5.1955). Some Buddhist Armed Personnel carried off and forcibly married 5 Muslim virgin girls belonging to the village of Shabe Bazar, Maungdaw township. On another occasion 2 virgin daughters of Master Syed Hussein of Kazirbil (Sabaigon), Maungdaw township were similarly married by some other army personnel.

The Independence Supplement of Morning News, August 14, 1969 referring to the subject of rehabilitating the refugees at the wake of independence in Pakistan, said: "In 1968 the Provincial Government held a census which revealed that there are 2,82,662 refugee families in East Pakistan. This figure includes 1,090 families who entered into East Pakistan

Describing the Rohingyas in distress Mr. Najmul Hasan, a correspondent of the Hindustan Times wrote in its issue dated March 21, 1975: "over 250 Bur-

mese Nationals allegedly disposed of their land and evicted out of their villages in Arakan, have arrived in Delhi, after crossing over from Bangladesh and losing Rs. 70,000 to currency changing touts, looking for a home, occupation and a country they can call their own.

"The scrawny and hungry men, women and 123 grimy-faced naked children ... rugged up at the Azad Park overlooking Jama Masjid, waiting for official help which is already 10 days late in coming. The Refugees alleged that the Government seized their land, varying in size from 5 to 30 acres, paid them no compensation and also pushed them out of the country.

The horrifying tale of the Rohingyas does not end here. In February, 1978 the Burmese Government started "Dragon Operation" in Mandhu subdivision. Muslims in Burma were murdered, their women abducted and raped, their houses burnt and they were pushed out of their hearths and home and forced to migrate to Bangladesh in Lakhs. Thousands of Burmese Muslims with harrowing tales of tortures and rape came from across the border for shelter in Bangladesh.

The total figure of the Burmese Rohingya refugees increases every minute due to fresh arrivals. The local administration is finding itself increasingly ill-equipped for taking up the great humanitarian task. On May 3, 1978, the French Newspaper 'Le Monde' published a news item under the headline "More than 70,000 Burmese Muslims now refugee in Bangladesh." On May 12, 'The Christian Science Monitor' under the caption

MAY, 1978.

"Bangladesh flooded by Burmese immigrants" wrote: "An influx of 100,000 refugees from Burma's Muslim minority in less than a month is posing vast humanitarian problems for impoverished Bangladesh and causing a rift in its relation with its neighbour". Still the Bangladesh Government is doing her utmost to meet the situation. She has arranged proper shelter for the refugees and the district administration has already cabled for help stating the position of refugees now in different camps in Akhya and Teknaf. The Bangladesh Government has already made arrangement for the refugees to settle in more than 300 makeshift camps along the 150-mile borders. She has also sanctioned 10 thousand maunds of wheat and Taka 100,000 as relief. But that is not enough for the number of refugees coming from Burma incessantly. The Daily Telegraph on May 13, 1978 reported that widespread cases of malnutrition and acute dysentery have been found in the refugee camps hastily thrown up in border areas to accommodate the new arrivals most of whom have nothing but the possessions they were able to carry. The Bangladesh Government has appealed to the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons, most of whom are located in camps in Chittagong district and Chittagong Hill Tracts district which border Burma. The UNICEF is providing emergency relief assistance to over 120,000 people mostly who have crossed into Bangladesh from Burma during the past four weeks. UNICEF is initially providing 50 drug and diet sup-

plementary kits which contain a complete range of standard drug for mother and child health care including tetracycline capsuls, oral dehydration salts and essential vitamins and iron supplements. In addition, UNICEF is providing 10,000 packets of oral dehydration salts for children suffering from severe dehydration caused by acute dysentery and diarrhoea. It is also helping the Bangladesh Government to sink 500 tubewells to provide clear drinking water for the people in the camps and has provided two trucks to transport relief goods to them. UNHCR Paul Hartling said he had set aside 500,000 dollars in emergency aid for the refugees. The refugees now live in more than 300 tented camps put up along the border by the Bangladesh Red Cross. Food and other facilities are provided by the Bangladesh Government.

The Burmese Muslim Refugees told reporters that they were the victims of concerted campaign against the Muslims in the north-west province of Arakan, bordering the Chittagong district of Bangladesh. Some refugees at the Neela camp said that in one part of Burmese Buthidang district even trained dogs were set upon Rohingya ethnic minority groups. Residents of Teknaf area also claimed having seen houses on the Burmese side of the Naaf on fire.

On May 3, 1978 the French newspaper "Le Monde" wrote "These refugee Muslims originally from Arakan, have affirmed that they suffered violent treatment when they are chased from their homes by the army. Twenty five bodies carrying the marks of brutalities have been discovered

on the Naaf river". In an eyewitness account, the Flويد weekly news magazine "Le Nouvel Observateur's" correspondent Francois Hauter affirmed that the massacre was an episode in a deliberate Burmese Government plan to drive a million Rohingyas-Burmese Muslims from Arakan province - out of the country. He also wrote in another article in the newspaper "Le Quotidien de Paris": "A woman with a deep stab wound in the left breast said she was the sole survivor of 17 women attacked earlier by Burmese soldiers. She said they cut off the breast of the other women, then stabbed them to death, but let her flee to tell the other Rohingyas and terrify them. Mr. Hauter said the 40,000 to 60,000 refugees who have crossed the border accuse the Burmese Army and police of unleashing a genocide campaign called "Operation Dragon" on February 6, 1978. The members of the Rabitah Al-Islam Al-Islami delegation to Bangladesh also saw for themselves evidence of desecration of the Holy Quran by the Burmese soldiers and inhuman treatment meted out to these refugees.

The Secretary General of the Islamic Council of Europe, Mr. Salem Azzam said that Muslims in Burma were facing genocide which has already resulted in large scale deaths and migration of over 150,000 Muslims to adjoining Bangladesh. He also asked Kurt Waldheim for immediate United Nations intervention to put an end to unprecedented grim and blood tragedy and for despatch of UN investigation team to Burma. The

(Continued)

Continuation

Motamar Al-Alam Al-Islami as early as February 1978, when this genocidal extermination was started by Burmese authorities, brought the sad plight of Arakanese Muslim citizens of Burma to the notice of the World. Also in its Memorandum to the 9th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers this inhuman story of forceful eviction of Burmese citizens by the Rangoon Government as well as trampling of their basic human rights were made known by the Motamar to the leaders of the Islamic world gathered in Dakar Conference. The Rabitah Al-Alam Al-Islami in a statement issued in Mecca on May 7 urged the Muslim countries to "reconsider their relations with Burma in an attempt to obtain total respect for the legiti-

mate right of minorities and Muslim communities. The Rabitah delegation to Bangladesh went round 8 camps where 1,35,000 refugees are temporarily housed. For immediate relief the Rabitah offered a donation of Takas 1,80,000 and promised to establish Masjid and Madrasahs and provide Imams and teachers for the same.

The Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mr. Fuad Abdul Hamid-Al-Khatib and leader of a six-man Islamic delegation to the border areas watched on May 15, 1978 as about 200 refugees crossed the river into Bangladesh in a small craft with their meagre belongings. The envoy said: "The influx must be stopped at all costs, otherwise it will lead to another Palestinian problem". While denouncing

these acts of persecution of children, women and aged men; the desecration of mosques, schools, and Islamic centres and the Holy Book of God, the Secretariat General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference drew world attention to the tragic situation of the Muslim Community and called on it to persuade the Burmese authorities to desist from its inhuman policies.

In spite of all these protests and denunciation, the Burmese Government is carrying on their genocidal activities. It is not a stray event. It is high time the Muslims all over the world should mount a concerted campaign against the Burmese Government which is trying to eliminate the Muslim community of Arakan with a view to making Arakan a Muslim minority province.



A group of Burmese refugees, just arrived (on Saturday) at Ky (upalong) camp, 25 miles off Cox's Bazar, are busy for constructing shelter.—Tim. sp

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# Burma carrying out genocide'

Leading newspapers in various parts of the world continue to publish stories of the forcible eviction of the Burmese ethnic and religious minority and their influx into Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The Australian newspaper "The Canberra Times" on May 16 under the headline "Muslims taken to labour camps in Burma" mentioned that young Muslims in Burma were being rounded up by the Burmese Army and taken to labour camps. They were being used to build a highway linking Rangoon with Akyab.

The paper added that the exodus of refugees to Bangladesh resulted from a campaign initiated by the Burmese Government to rid the country of the ethnic Muslim minority. Allegations that they were illegal immigrants who fled to Burma during 1971 were groundless. Many of the refugees carried registration cards which showed that they were Burmese citizens in good standing.

On May 15 another Australian newspaper "Herald" carried news under the heading "horror flight from Burma". The news says: "Burmese fascist dictatorship is carrying out a campaign of genocide on its million Muslim citizens". The news published a story of a woman as told to a French correspondent, the soldier attacked a group of 17 women cut off their breasts and bayoneted them all to death. They stabbed me in the chest but let me go so that I could tell my people what to expect if we remain in Burma".

Indonesia's largest circulation daily must be found soon".

The British newspaper, "The Sunday Times" on May 14 published a story in bold types with a four-colour photograph on the plight of the Burmese refugees. The photograph shows a mother protecting her child as Burmese soldiers open fire at Taungbro on the Burma-Bangladesh border on April 23.

The news was carried under the caption, "The day Burma's census turned into bloodbath" which says that the veil has been lifted on "one of the world's great unreported tragedies—the exodus of 150,000 Burmese Muslims forced to flee their homes in Burma and seek refuge in neighbouring Bangla-

desh. Burma is predominantly Buddhist but it has a large Muslim minority living in the Arakan region".

## PERSECUTION

The paper adds, "This year the government ordered banishment of the whole population. It called the project King Dragon". In the Arakan the census seems to have turned into religious persecution if one can believe the refugees' stories and the testimony of two French journalists who have witnessed this border shooting in which hundreds of people were killed".

Another London daily, "The Daily Telegraph" published on May 15 its correspondent Bruce Lovendon's story from New Delhi under the caption, "Bangladesh faces clash with Burma".

The news, quoting a reporter for Asiaweek, says: "Some of the refugees carry their parents, too ill or too old to walk, on their backs. Women beg strangers to listen while they tell of husbands and brothers shot dead, houses looted and burned, mothers and daughters raped while their families were forced to watch".

## KANJAN

On May 14, the French newspaper "Kelyon International" under a four-colour headline "Burmese massacre refugees escaping" quoting the prestigious French weekly "Le Nouvel Observateur" wrote: "Thirty Burmese soldiers set up light machine-guns and fired into a mass of 10,000 Muslim refugees on the Bangladesh border. In an eyewitness account, the Observateur's correspondent, Francois Hauter, affirmed that the massacre was an episode in a deliberate Burmese government plan to drive a million Rohingya, Burmese Muslims of Arakan province out of the country".

## ARAB TIMES

The Kuwait newspaper, "The Arab Times" on May 15, under the caption, "Kuwait concerned over plight of Burma Muslims",

reported "The Kuwait cabinet yesterday expressed grave concern over the plight of the Muslims in Burma and appealed to the Burmese Government to ensure the security of their Muslim countrymen".

## UTUSAN MALAYSIA

The Malaysian newspaper, "Utusan Malaysia" in an edito-

rial on May 18 commented that Malaysia, as a Muslim country, could not remain silent over the fate of the Muslims who were maltreated. Meanwhile the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia in a telegram expressed grave concern over the attack by the Burmese army on Muslims in Burma.

The telegram said that this is apparently the climax of the government's act of suppression of the Muslims in the past years and urged the Malaysian government to use its good offices to solve the problem.

## Malaysia awaits report on Muslim refugees

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Malaysian Government is awaiting an official report on the influx of Muslim refugees from Burma into Bangladesh, Foreign Affairs Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen said today.

He added that the Government would have to study the problem closely before it could play its part to help solve the issue.

Malaysia would like to see the problem facing Bangladesh and Burma solved amicably.

He was commenting on a newspaper report quoting Bangladesh High Commissioner here, Mr K. M. Salfullah, that his country would be seeking Malaysia's good office to help solve the issue.

The report said Mr Salfullah will brief Tengku Rithauddeen on Friday on the issue.

The Malaysian High Commissioner in Bangladesh, Enck Ismail Ambia, was recently briefed by officials of the Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Ministry.

It is reported that more than 100,000 Muslim refugees have so far crossed into Bangladesh from Burma. — Bernama



# impact international

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**BERMA  
OPERATION  
DRAGON  
KING**

## MUSLIMS IN BURMA

## Operation Dragon King

LAST MARCH the World Muslim Congress in Karachi sent a telegram to UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim calling attention to 'the genocidal extermination of Muslim citizens of Burma residing in Arakan province'. It spoke of the 'continuous destruction of Muslim life and property' in an area where Muslims have been living for almost 1,000 years and where they form the majority. It also said that the extermination of Muslims by Burmese governmental and non-governmental agencies has recently become more 'ruthless'.

This, it has now become chillingly clear, is no exaggeration. The situation in Arakan is now being described as 'one of the world's great unreported tragedies' (*Sunday Times*, 14 May) in which some 150,000 Burmese Muslims have been forced to flee their homes in Burma and seek refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. The problem has reached such proportions as to be a source of renewed tension between the authorities in Dacca and Rangoon.

The immediate cause of the continuing tragedy is said to be the census of the whole population which the Burmese government ordered earlier this year. On 7 May 1978 Rangoon radio admitted that the Burmese Department of Immigration and Manpower under the Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs was 'determined to carry out Project Naga Min (Dragon King) for classifying citizens and non-citizens but was experiencing problems in the Arakan State in examining people individually. The problems it said concerned illegal Bengali immigrants into Burma. It was these who were fleeing from the immigration check while some unscrupulous ones among them had committed acts of intimidation, arson and theft and even ambushed Burmese immigration officials.

The official Burmese account hardly fits in with the testimony of journalists and the accounts given by evacuees as they struggle into steadily overflowing and inadequate camps which have been set up in Bangladesh to receive them.

An eye-witness account tells of the refugees as they 'straggle in bearing babies in slings, bedrolls under their arms. Some carry their parents, too ill or too old to walk, on their backs. Women beg strangers to listen while they tell of husbands and brothers shot dead, houses looted and burned, mothers and daughters raped while their families were forced to watch'. The Muslim World Congress had also spoken in March about the brutal violation of Muslim women, the mutilation of children and the violent killing of men in Arakan. Two French journalists who witnessed the scenes portrayed in the cover picture say that 'over a million Burmese Muslims are in danger of being exterminated'. They report that 100 people were killed in one incident. There seems to be no doubt that the Burmese authorities are carrying out a deliberate campaign of oppression and persecution against the Muslims of Arakan.

That the problem is not one of illegal Bangladeshi nationals in Burma is evidenced by the fact that it has been simmering for some thirty years now but has worsened considerably since 1962 when the military government of General Ne Win assumed power in Burma through a coup d'état. In fact, since 1962 the overall situation of Muslims in Burma has worsened.

There are about three million Muslims in Burma, nearly ten per cent of the total population. They form the second largest religious community in the predominantly Buddhist country. The first constitution of independent Burma had a clause recognizing the special place of Buddhism, and another clause which recognized Islam, Christianity and some other religions professed by citizens of the country.

Muslims live all over the country. There are Muslims in every town. There are groups of Muslims or Muslim-majority villages in Shwebo, Kyauka Kyaukse, Pyinmana, Moulmein and Moulmeinayun areas. The largest concentration of Muslims is in the

province of Arakan where they form the majority. Here the people call themselves Rohingyas. Their number is more than 500,000 although higher figures have been claimed at times. They are a settled population and have lived there for more than 500 years, preserving their language and culture. Apart from Rohingyas, Burmese Muslims can be roughly divided into two groups: those of Indo-Pakistan origin who have retained some links with the subcontinent and those who are Burmans or have become Burmanized and whose language is Burmese. There is also a small number of Chinese Muslims or their descendants.

For a long time now the Rohingyas have been subjected to a lot of pressure. During the last 30 years many towns and settlements are said to have been destroyed as a result of persecution. Long before the present wave of persecution associated with Operation Dragon King, there have been reports that Rohingyas were dispossessed of their lands and physically forced to cross the border into East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The situation was contained somewhat during the time of Ayub Khan who is reported to have issued a thinly veiled warning to the Burman government by saying, 'I hope you do not want our forces to cross the border'.

Nonetheless, the Rohingyas were subjected to harassment. For a Rohingya to go from Akyab in north Arakan to Rangoon he needs an official permit. This rule does not apply to any other citizen. Their National Registration Certificates (NRCs) have been seized and torn. From time to time, immigration department staff, even before Operation Dragon King, have made raids and, on the allegation that they are foreigners, Rohingyas have been forced to take out Foreigners' Registration Certificates (FRCs). This means not only the loss of citizenship rights, but also the payment of an annual fee to the Government. Children of foreigners are not allowed to attend professional courses at the Universities. If a Rohingya refuses to leave



COVER: A man killed by Burmese soldiers. Photo by Andre Abogo Gamma.

the country or to take out a FRC on the plea that he is a citizen, he is placed under detention. In 1971 (before the break-up of Pakistan), the Pakistan embassy had deputed an officer to meet the detainees — the conclusion was reached that they were not Bengalis (East Pakistanis). In July last year it was estimated that there were 500 or more such persons in jail for as long as 15 years or more. These include a number of Rohingya women. Some had with them small children, who have since grown up in detention. In the jails they are treated as ordinary criminal offenders.

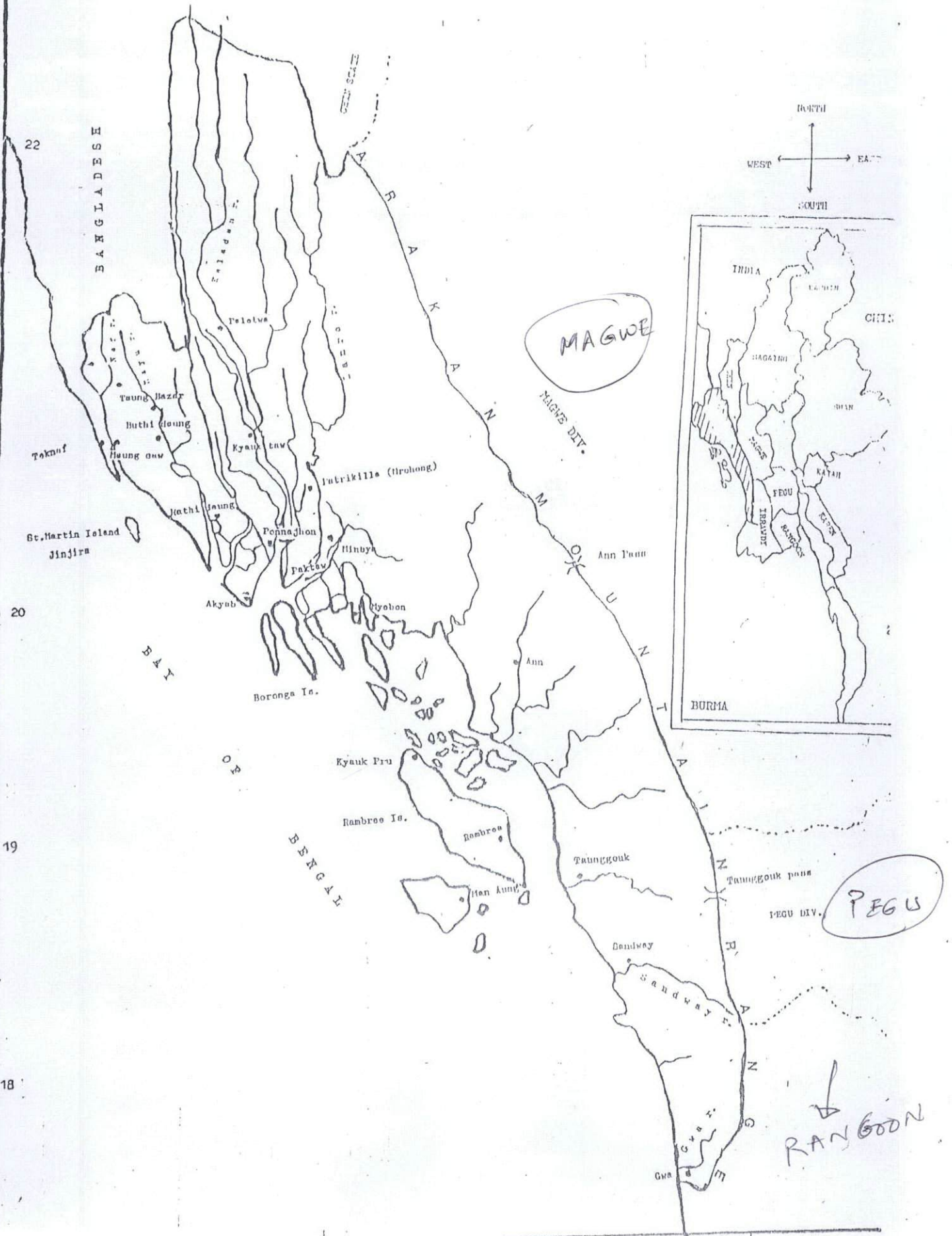
Muslims in Arakan, like Muslims in the rest of Burma, have been faced with a number of problems since the armed forces took over in 1962. No one has been allowed to go on Hajj since then. The import of books has been nationalized with the result that no copies of the Qur'an or other Islamic literature are allowed to be imported. Approval has only been given for printing 3,000 copies of the Qur'an which has been translated into Burmese. Islamic literature sent as gifts are not allowed since authorities want to see translation of these into Burmese... In some places, construction of mosques has not been permitted and in a few cases waqf lands have been sequestered by the government.

In Arakan itself, the Rohingyas say they are the victims of an anti-Muslim purge. Other reports allege that the embattled Burmese Government is taking action

(a)

# ARAKAN

70



against an incipient Arakan secessionist movement. If there is an incipient secessionist movement, the wave of persecution, killings, torture and expulsions is certainly a draconian way to deal with it. This is especially so since other provinces of Burma in which the Shan, Karen and Kachin people predominate have been given provincial autonomy and are well settled. The Muslim population of Arakan can also be treated at par with them so

that they may live as honourable citizens of Burma which they claim to be and which they are.

Instead an alternative is being proposed which could bring prolonged instability and suffering in the area. Officials in Bangladesh have been reported as saying ominously: 'If the Burmese won't take these people back, the best way for us to cope with the problem will be to arm the refugees and help them to form a liberation front'.

Such an eventuality could spell greater trouble for Muslims in the whole of Burma from the military socialist government. Muslims have noted that the Burmese as a whole are a friendly, polite and generous people. Except for once serious riot which took place

in 1936 and the continuing repression in Arakan, Muslims have lived in peace close to the Burmese Buddhist localities and villages. The Muslims, it has also been noted, have fully participated in national activities including the struggle for independence and have always been loyal to the country. The Burmese Government would do well to heed the numerous calls from all over the world to rehabilitate the refugees and put an end to the atrocities. □

● **Bangladesh protest.** Bangladesh has lodged a strong protest with the Burmese Government against the 'repression and forcible expulsion of Burmese nationals belonging to a particular ethnic and religious minority'. Bangladesh called upon Burma to desist from

measures responsible for the exodus of Burmese nationals into Bangladesh in the interest of good neighbourly relations and the maintenance of peace on the border. It urged Burma to take urgent and appropriate measures for the immediate repatriation of the Burmese nationals to their homes. The note pointed out that while Bangladesh is attempting to provide the basic needs of refugees solely on humanitarian grounds, the burden of providing shelter and food to over a hundred thousand refugees have placed an extremely severe economic strain on Bangladesh.

The Foreign Affairs advisor Prof. Muhammad Shamsul Haq in a cable to UN Secretary General has asked for all possible assistance to solve the alarming problem.



U No Win

## BURMA

### Political background

Burma was an independent kingdom, or a number of kingdoms over the centuries. It was one kingdom in the 19th century, with local chieftains in some areas, who owed allegiance to the king.

The British occupied it in three stages in 1824-26, 1852 and 1885. They took the coastal areas of Arakan and Tenasserim first, followed by Lower Burma, and finally Upper Burma, when they occupied the then capital, Mandalay, and took the king, Thibaw, a prisoner.

The large bulk of the population is ethnically Burmese. It has been suggested that centuries ago, they came from Turkestan, one branch going to Tibet and the other to Burma. Linguistically, experts say, there are some similarities between Tibetan and Burmese languages. The people on the Arakan coast to the west and the Tenasserim coast in the south speak Burmese, but with accents of their own.

All along the land borders, there are small racial minorities — Chins on the north west — they are akin to

Lushais of India; small numbers of Nagas; Kachins (who call themselves Jingpaws) in the north — there are Jingpaws in China also; Shans in the north east and east — they are akin to Thais and their two languages are very similar; Kayahs to the east; Mons to the south-east and Karens who have some concentration to the east, but are scattered all over Lower Burma.

Traditionally, feelings between the Karens and Burmese have been strained. Shortly after independence, the Karens and Mons started rebellions. After a few years a Karen State was conceded and a Mon State assured, but these steps did not help to end the rebellions. A fair proportion of the Karens, estimated at between 20 to 30% are Christians, mostly Baptist.

From the beginning of independence a Kachin State, a Shan State and a Kayah State were established. These states had a measure of autonomy in regard to health, education, and local administration. At their own request the Chin area was

made into a Special Division, but later became a State. The States had their State Councils, Head of State and Ministers.

Within a few years after independence, rebellion spread to parts of Shan State and later Kachin State and even Chin State.

During the Second World War, when the Japanese had occupied Burma, an underground Anti-Fascist League was started. Communists were in it and played a leading role. Later this became the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL).

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, some young, patriotic Burmans joined together to form a nationalist organization, vaguely socialist, called Do Bama Asiayone (We Burmans Association). They called themselves Thakins (Masters), the word then usually applied to the British. These young patriots added the word Thakin as a prefix to their names e.g. Aung San (later General Aung San, and father of the independence movement) became Thakin Aung San; U Nu (later Prime Minister) became Thakin Nu. The Thakins were later to split into some three groups.

In 1940, Aung San was deputed to go to China to seek

help to fight the British and secure independence. The Japanese intercepted him and persuaded him to take their help. Aung San returned to Burma in disguise, collected 29 other young men. They received military training from the Japanese and returned to Burma as the spearhead of the Burma Independence Army. Ne Win (later General Ne Win and now President Ne Win) was one of the group.

Within a few months of working with the Japanese and seeing Japanese behaviour as rulers, the Thakins became disillusioned. They had to lie low, but quietly organized an uprising, which coincided with the Allied re-entry into Burma.

By then, the AFPFL was a powerful organization with Aung San, not only its President, but undisputed leader. He was a man of flawless character, absolutely honest and selfless. With the approach of independence, the Communists became vociferous. They called negotiated independence a "sham" and insisted on armed struggle. Differences grew and Aung San threw the Communists out of the AFPFL in late 1946. Aung San went to London early in 1947 with the slogan 'Independence within one year'. The Aung

San-Attlee agreement was signed agreeing to the grant of independence within a year. The racial minorities were persuaded to join the Union of Burma. A Constituent Assembly was elected and the drafting of the Constitution started. All the basic principles were settled and a good deal of the drafting was done by mid-July.

On the 19th July, a group of armed men forced entry into the Cabinet Room, Aung San and six Ministers, including an elder brother of Aung San, a Shan Chieftain and a Burman Muslim, U Razak were killed. The plan included the murder of U Nu, then Speaker, but he was not in his room.

The murderers were traced and arrested the same afternoon. They had been backed by an ex-Premier, U Saw, who had accompanied Aung San to London. There was an open trial by a Tribunal, presided over by a Senior Judge. U Saw was allowed to engage a British counsel. Several men were found guilty, some including U Saw were sentenced to death and others to terms of imprisonment.

The British Governor invited U Nu on that fateful 19th July to become Premier and he accepted. The drafting of the Constitution was com-

pleted. Burma became independent on 4th January 1948.

Shortly afterwards the Communists (who later split into two) and the Karens started rebellions. At one time Rangoon was surrounded by the rebels — within about 10-12 mile from the City centre. Mandalay was occupied by the rebels, who were joined by a part of the army, for a short while. Steadily the whole Burma proper, and all the lowlands were re-taken by Government. The rebels moved into the hilly areas. Rebellion has continued since and is still going on.

Steady progress was made in all sectors — agriculture, industry, education, health, etc. Parliamentary elections took place in 1952, 1956 and 1960.

Differences mostly personal had grown among leaders of the AFPFL from about 1957. The party split in 1958. Prime Minister U Nu invited General Ne Win, then Commander-in-Chief of the Army to form a Caretaker Government and hold elections. General Ne Win took oath of office as Prime Minister late in 1958. Elections were held early in 1960. The group led by U Nu, which called itself the Pyi Daung Zu Party (Union Party) won an

overwhelming victory. In a few months, differences arose, again mostly personal.

On the 2nd March 1962, the armed forces led by General Ne Win seized power. The President, the Chief Justice, the Prime Minister and several Ministers were arrested and kept in detention for several years. There were no charges, no enquiries and no trials.

The reasons given, at first, for coup were two: (1) the adoption of Buddhism as State Religion under the leadership of U Nu and (2) the likelihood of concessions to the racial minorities, who were asking for a federal form of Constitution. It was alleged that the country was about to be shattered, but, over the years, no evidence has been produced that this was, in fact, the situation.

Within a few months, the new Government announced its socialist policies, political parties were banned, a new party the Burmese Way to Socialism Party (Myanma Socialist Lanzin Party) was formed.

A new Constitution was promulgated in 1975.

Export of rice and teak and import of some goods had been nationalized in the days of parliamentary democracy. The Ne Win Government fully

nationalized all imports and exports, almost all industries and banks (including foreign banks). Except in the case of banks and perhaps some British companies, no compensation has been paid, although it was promised. All schools have been nationalized. The economy has been shattered. There is little legal trading. Government does not have foreign exchange for spare parts, or adequate quantities of raw materials. Smuggling is general.

In the autumn of 1976, Mr McNamara, President of the World Bank visited Burma. Hopes were raised that there would be a change of economic policy. The Party Congress met in February 1977. The Prime Minister (U Sein Win), the Deputy Prime Minister, U Lwin and some 12 others were thrown out on the grounds that they were not following the Party line.

Politically, U Ne Win, the President is firmly in power, despite the economic mess and dissatisfaction. The regime is not popular, but there is no organized opposition. Ex-General San Yu, who was regarded as a soldier and non-political, has steadily moved left. He is General Secretary of the Party and is next to Ne Win in power and influence.



# The case of Rohingya Muslims

## The world's greatest unreported tragedy

Give the dog a bad name and kill him. This is exactly what the Burmese Authority is doing. Terming them as infiltrators, saboteurs and opposers of registration the ethnic minorities, the Rohingya Muslims who are the lawful residents of Burma for generations are being systematically driven out of the country and forced into taking shelter in the neighbouring Bangladesh. If one listens to the Burma Broadcasting Service or to the Burmese charges one will be dismayed at the blatant lies being spread out systematically every day. The ethnic minorities are being branded as Bengalees, as the one opposing the registration drive of the citizens as the elements engaged in sabotage, and killing or injuring Burmese officials or soldiers. Their main intention in doing so is to influence world public opinion.

Lies are always lies and truth

always prevails. More one lakh fifty thousand Rohingyas are in Bangladesh. They are coming in unending stream. The daily influx of the refugees has reached five thousand. If the figure is maintained it will exceed two lakh in no time. Some have described the present figure of those who have taken shelter in Bangladesh as only the tip of the iceberg meaning thereby that the majority of the 15 lakh Rohingya Muslims may be driven out if the so-called Operation Dragon of the Burmese Authority is not stopped. Those who have taken shelter in Bangladesh have woeful tales to tell. They narrate genocide, indiscriminate loot and plunder of their properties, burning and demolition of their home and hearth, rape of their women folk, taking away of the young and able bodied ones to concentration camps and engaging them into forced labour.

It is reported that mosques have been turned into places of sex orgies of Burmese soldiers.

World Press and people all around the globe have condemned the atrocities perpetrated on these hapless Muslims. Bangladesh has asked the Burmese government to take back these people who are very much its citizens and create condition for their secured and peaceful living. Bangladesh has called for international help for the succour of those evicted people and help has started coming. Let the world act now. Let the world exert pressure on the Burmese government to treat its Muslim population in a humane and civilised way.

**Photo shows the sorrows and agonies of the evicted Muslims from Burma.**

At Kutupalong outside the camp refugees are waiting

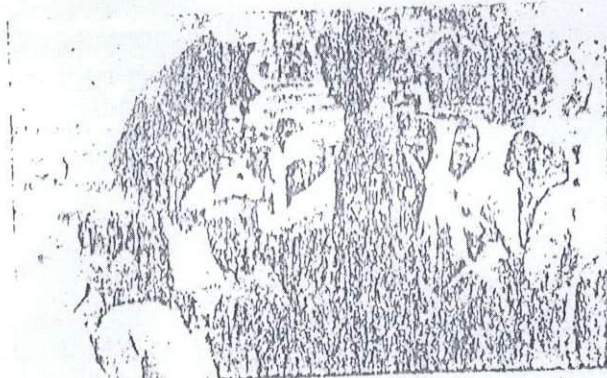


Burmese Ethnic minority evictees at Kutupalong camp.

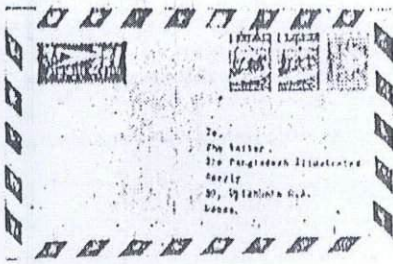


Burmese ethnic minority evicted from Bochdong, on way to a camp, Teknaf.

Burmese ethnic minority evictees at Nila camp.



Letters to the Editor.



## Genocide in Burma

The forcible eviction of the Arakanis (Rohingyas) from Burma and their subsequent influx into the Bangladesh territory in recent weeks have posed a great problem for Bangladesh, both political and human. The areas bordering Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong districts have been influxed by thousands of these helpless evictees who call themselves "Rohingyas".

More than seventy thousand of them crossed the border by 30th April. They are staying in the camps at Katupalong, Balukhall, Tambru, Gundang and so many other places. More than a hundred thousand of such people are passing their days in the jungles of Maungdaw Sub-division of Burma to save themselves from annihilation. Recently I crossed over to Burma. I found the young boys and girls much fewer in number than what should have been usually expected. Asked about the reason. They replied that young boys were killed and girls were taken away by force and also raped in presence of their parents. All houses were destroyed by fire. A veritable Magher Rule (Magher Mulluk) was unleashed. I then perceived the real meaning of the expression Magher Mulluk.

It was a horrible scene and a queer type of genocide which only serves to exemplify the expression Magher Mulluk. When will good sense prevail upon the Burmese Government?

AKM Maqsood Ahmad

Chittagong.

## Rally in front of Burmese Embassy

By A Staff Reporter

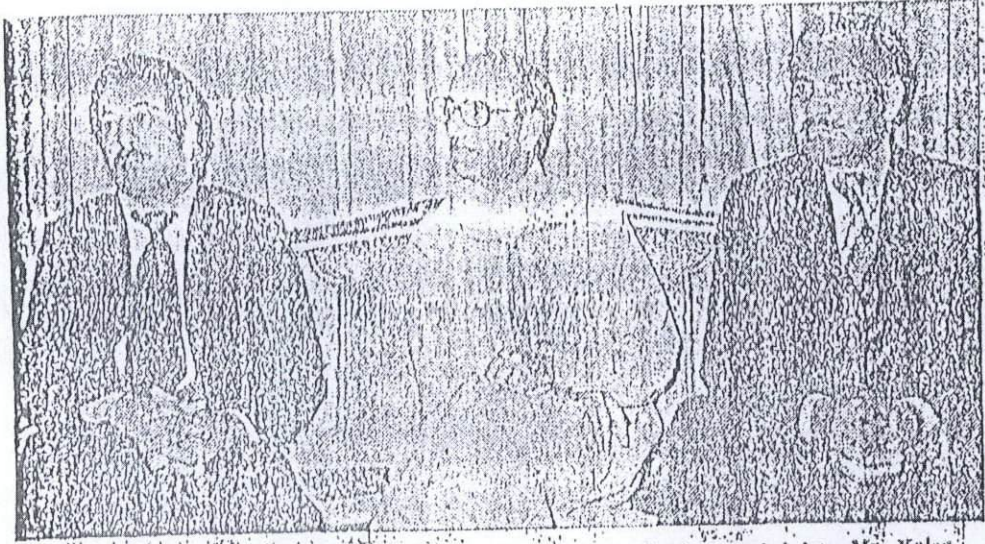
Students staged demonstrations in front of the Embassy of Burma in Dacca on Tuesday to protest against the persecution and eviction of Burmese minority. They handed over a memorandum to the Burmese Charge D'Affaires.

Students who belonged to Bangladesh Islamic Chhatra Shibir, chanted slogans protesting against the persecution and eviction of Burmese Nationals belonging to ethnic minority. They also carried placards condemning the atrocities perpetrated on them.

The students in their memorandum urged the Burmese Government to take positive steps to ameliorate the sufferings of the Burmese national and make possible return of the refugees.



Students staging demonstration in front of the Embassy of Burma in Dacca on Tuesday to protest against the persecution of Burmese ethnic minorities. —Times



A four-member delegation from the organisation of the Islamic Conference led by Mr. Kaleem Zehri, Assistant Secretary General arrived in Dacca on Tuesday to examine the problem of the Burmese evictees. —PID photo

## Zehri condemns atrocities to Burmese Muslims

DACCA, June 2:—Mr. Kaleem Zehri, Assistant Secretary General, and leader of the four-member delegation from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, today described the conditions of Muslim refugees from Burma as "catastrophic", and called for concerted international action and coordinated efforts to end this human tragedy, reports BSS.

Members of the delegation who visited the camps along Bangladesh Burma border, sheltering one lakh fiftyfour thousand refugees, said, most of them were suffering from mal-nutrition and were deprived of all everyday necessities and were dangerously exposed to epidemics and other hazards.

Mr. Zehri said, the refugees were traumatised by the inhuman repression including rape, genocide and confiscation of their properties and personal possessions in Burma. "One would hardly believe the pathetic scenes which are analogous to the Nazi prac-

tices," Mr. Zehri said adding that the international agencies and the world at large should come forward to stop this continuing exodus of refugees and ensure the repatriation of those taking shelter in the Bangladesh camps.

The other members of the delegation are Mr. Ahmed Fauzi Iftal, Libyan Ambassador to Jeddah, Major General Fazal Mukim Khan, Pakistan Ambassador to Jeddah and Mr. Waliur Rahman, an official of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

THE DAILY LIFE

OIC



# Rohingyas' outcry

Nothing can be more heartening than the news that a Bangladesh delegation headed by our Foreign Secretary Mr. Tabarak Hussain is due to leave for Rangoon on June 6 to discuss the problem of refugees with the Burmese authorities, in view of the latest Burmese reply seeking an amicable settlement for the repatriation of the Burmese refugees now languishing in the 9 temporary camps set up in Bangladesh on humanitarian ground.

The world bodies have, by now, become thoroughly acquainted with the real facts as to why and how about 7,50,000 Rohingyas of Arakan have so far (since 1940s) been compelled to flee their centuries-old motherland. The Burmese government's policy of extirpating the Rohingyas is clearly in defiance of world opinion and norms of international law.

It is no doubt true that the over-stretched economy of a newly emerged country like that of our Bangladesh cannot bear the burden of feeding, clothing, housing and taking other necessary cares of about 2,50,000 refugees. We have been taken completely unawares by the most dramatic turn of things especially at a time when we have a diplomatic relationship with Burma.

The influx of refugees is still continuing unabated

in spite of hectic efforts by our government for solving the problem bilaterally. If this flow of mass exodus to our territory is not fore-stalled and warranted at this stage the number of evictees may swell up even to 7,50,000 within the current monsoon. It is no hallucination or shadowboxing but a stark reality.

A common saying prevalent in our countryside is that one should always be very cautious in dealing with double dealers. So, had there been any sincerity on the part of the Burmese authorities the matter could be easily solved even at the initial stages when interchanges of special envoys and delegations were in progress a couple of weeks back.

However, seeing the pitiable spectacle of human misery and distress, several humanitarian world organisations, sovereign states and philanthropic individuals or groups of individuals, have also come forward and rendering all possible help to the refugees. Anyway, the question that naturally arises in this context is: Why and how long should we thus continue to bear the pressure of such a bulk of victims of genocide? We are thereby rather weakening our economy. Likewise it has as well created an internal problem for us. There is an outburst

of public sentiment in the country over this very question of 'Extermination of Burmese Muslim Nationals'. Therefore, the earlier the matter is settled up the better it is for us.

The 'OUTCRY' of the Rohingyas has long been echoing along the vast coast of the Bay of Bengal and the two estuaries of the river Naf. But, alas! none in this wide world ever before either cared to hear them or tried to explore the causes thereof. This protracted apathy to their causes eventually emboldened General Ne Win's racist government in recently accelerating the implementation of its pre-planned monstrous policy of systematically exterminating the Muslims of Burma and particularly those of Arakan.

So far about 7,50,000 Rohingyas fled the country and took refuge in different parts of the world. The remaining, however, were enduring with utmost patience the numerous wrongs, injustices and tortures by the ruling Junta. But the tyranny has gradually reached its climax. So, being unable to bear the ugliest genocidal crimes any longer they have recently been taking refuge on our side, in large numbers, for whose immediate repatriation the international commu-

SHAMSUDDIN AHMED

nity should forthwith effa-  
ciously pressurise the  
intransigent Burmese  
government. A positive  
action towards this end  
now brooks no delay.

Candidly speaking, we  
entertain no malice  
against any friendly coun-  
try. We are neither in-  
clined to 'take up the  
hatchet' against anyone  
unless we are seriously  
provoked. It is, never-  
theless, needless to empha-  
size that we are always  
up to the policy of sett-  
ling things amicably.

But, the things gradu-  
ally arising out of the  
impasse are somewhat  
suspicious and indicative  
of the fact that under  
the plea of having ami-  
cable discussions the vete-  
ran Burmese General is  
killing time so as to  
enable his country to get  
consolidated and well-  
fortified at all vulnerable  
frontiers in the meanwhile,  
God willing, circumstances  
may not compel us to  
come in confrontation with  
a neighbouring country  
like that of Burma. We do  
believe that 'Prevention  
is better than Cure'.  
Characteristically, we do  
not challenge anybody  
but when we are really  
challenged we will be  
found ready and invin-  
cible.

Interviews with some  
of the refugees reveal  
that they want to be  
immediately repatriated  
to their own country and  
properly rehabilitated un-  
der supervision of inter-

national security forces.  
Otherwise, they like to  
be rendered all-out sup-  
port so that they can  
successfully emancipate  
themselves from the ty-  
rants or die in harness  
on their own soil in Ara-  
kan where they have  
their ancestral homes and  
lands and there dead ones.

showers, the issue must be  
settled early and once for  
all, preferably in consult-  
ation with their efficient  
representatives, for 'procr-  
astination is the thief of  
time'. The Burmese autho-  
rities might play some ho-  
ax this time too for  
getting their position still  
more solidified at the



One of the fundamen-  
tal points that they so  
vehemently asserted during  
the course of interviews  
is that all of their  
1.5 million people, whe-  
ther inside or outside  
the country and irrespec-  
tive of places of birth  
and residence are invari-  
ably and unreservedly  
ROHINGYAS though tens  
of thousands of them have  
been illegally debarred  
under blanket laws and  
scuttle policies, from  
having their valid Natio-  
nal Registration Cards.

As the stream of refu-  
gees into our country is  
assuming the size of an  
avalanche, specially during  
these days of torrential

cost of our Bangladesh.  
The theory of 'better late  
than never' will surely be  
not workable in such high-  
ly sensitive cases having  
far-reaching consequences.  
We cannot yet be optimis-  
tic of any timely settlement  
of this burning problem for  
there still lies the possibi-  
lity of being diplomatically  
duped by the Burmese  
negotiators.

It is, therefore, most  
confidently believed that  
our benign govt. will leave  
no stone unturned in sett-  
ling up with the Burmese  
authorities the imperative  
'ROHINGYA REPATRI-  
ATION' problem, with-  
out any further loss of time  
for much water flowed  
down the Naf since.



A nine-member Bangladesh Delegation, led by Foreign Secretary Mr. Tabarak Hussain, left for Rangoon on Tuesday for talks with the Burmese authorities for solution of the problem of ethnic minority refugees from Burma. —AP Photo

## Team arrives in Rangoon for talks on refugee issue

RANGOON June 6.—Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Tabarak Hussain arrived here today to discuss the problem of thousands of people who fled Burma to seek refuge in Bangladesh, reports Reuter.

Bangladesh President Ziaur Rahman said in Dacca yesterday that the 200,000 Muslim refugees who had crossed into Bangladesh were Burmese nationals and must return to their country.

But Burma maintains that many of the refugees were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, some of whom had settled along the border areas for several years.

The Rangoon Government has stated that it will take back those who could prove that they are bona fide citizens of Burma.

Mr. Hussain who is accompanied by nine high-ranking officials, will remain here for five days.

President Zia who was speaking following his overwhelming success in Saturday's presidential election, said he hoped the Burmese Government would provide a solution to the refugee problem.

But informed sources here said that the Burmese Government was still continuing its drive against illegal immigrants rounding up scores of people in Rangoon suburbs during the last

48 hours.

An earlier report in Dacca says: The Foreign Secretary Mr. Tabarak Hussain left Dacca Tuesday morning for Rangoon leading a nine-member delegation for talks with the Burmese authorities for a "just and speedy" solution of the problem of the Muslim refugees from Burma.

This will be the first direct talks between the two countries since the big exodus of Muslim began from April 18 this year.

Earlier, the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh and Burma met in Dacca from April 13 to April 16 to discuss the problem.

Mr. Tabarak Hussain told newsmen before his departure at the airport that he would discuss the whole range of the issue connected with the refugees and their early repatriation to their homes in Burma. "We have taken a very reasonable and logical stand to solve the problem through bilateral negotiations," he said adding "We hope the other side will respond for an amicable and speedy solution of the problem."

The Foreign Secretary said, the two countries held talks in Dacca as the Muslims from Burma started crossing into Bangladesh territory. But the

mass exodus began from April 18 and it is continuing unabated till now, he added.

Mr. Tabarak Hussain said number of Muslim refugees from Burma stood at one lakh 67 thousand on June 3 with the influx of three to five thousand on an average per day. He said, Bangladesh has taken a reasonable and firm stand on the issue without showing any posture of belligerence and hoped that the refugees would be repatriated to their homes at the earliest.

When asked how long the talks continue, the Foreign Secretary said, "We are going for three days but it will depend on the trend of negotiation."

In reply to another question, he said, the Burmese authorities have shown the intention of the possibility of a just solution of the matter.

The Bangladesh delegation includes Major-General Atiqur Rahman, Director General of the Bangladesh Rifles, Mr. Harunur Rashid, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. A. Awal Commissioner Chittagong Division, Mr. Nurul Islam Shams, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home and Mr. Enamul Haq, Principal Information Officer, Press Information Department.

BANGLADESH OBSERVER  
WEDNESDAY JUNE 7 1978

# Refugees must go back to Burma, says president

**PRESIDENT Ziaur Rahman** says 200,000 Muslim refugees who have crossed into Bangladesh from Burma were Burmese nationals and must return to their country.

He said he hoped the Burmese government would provide a solution to the problem.

A nine-man Bangladesh government delegation was to leave for Rangoon yesterday for talks on the refugee situation. Burma maintains that many of the refugees were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

The refugees have claimed that Burmese soldiers assaulted their women and took men away to labour camps in a campaign to drive them out. These allegations have been denied by the Burmese authorities.

Zia was speaking at a press conference in Dacca following his success in Saturday's presidential election. He won 77 per cent of the vote against 22 per cent by opposition leader Ataul Ghani Osmani, a retired general.

Zia said elections for a parliament would be held in December, but he would not say when martial law would be lifted.

He said some restrictions of martial law had already been lifted: "We have been lifting it gradually. It will go at the appropriate time," he said.

Zia said he was very happy with the election result and said the people of Bangladesh had shown political maturity.

The World Bank and other organisations should now come forward with aid and give the Bangladesh economy a big push, he said.

Questioned about the number of executions carried out after the military coup in 1975, Zia said he could not answer that question.

—Reuter

Saudi Gazette,

Wednesday, June 7, 1978



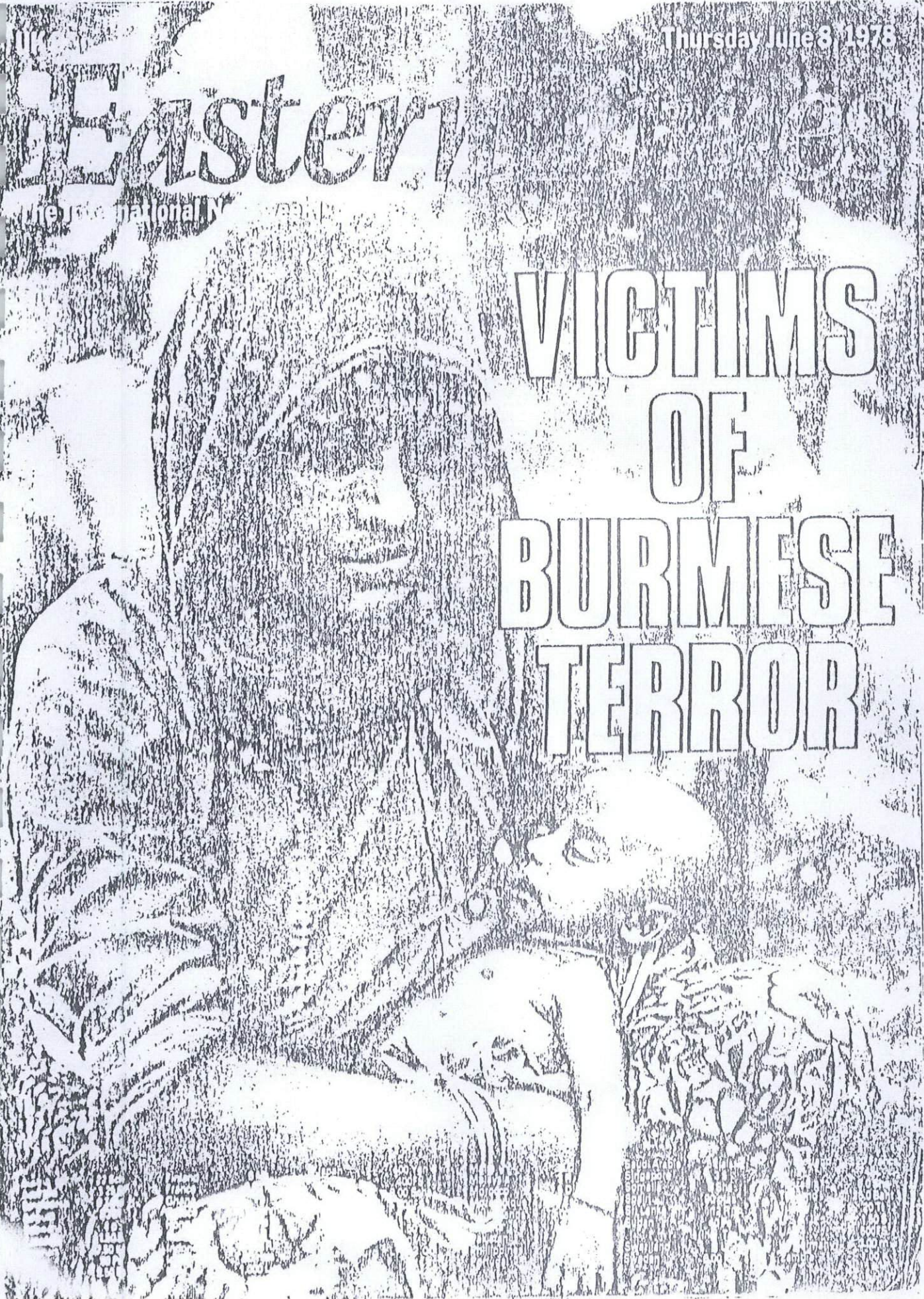
The Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister and Leader of the visiting Burmese delegation Mr. U Tin Oin called on President Ziaur Rahman at Bangabhaban on Sunday. —PID Photo

Thursday June 8 1978

# Eastern

The International News Service

# VICTIMS OF BURMESE TERROR



## FOCUS

# A story of rape, arson and murder

Eastern Times staff men, Alan Daventry and Andrew Holt, are the first Western journalists to visit refugee camps set up by the Bangladesh Government to house and care for the refugees fleeing a wave of anti-Muslim terror unleashed by the Burmese authorities.

Code named Operation Dragon, this terror has resulted in 150,000 men, women and children seeking sanctuary in Bangladesh, and it is estimated that if international opinion fails to restrain the Burmese, Bangladesh, over-burdened with its own immense problems will have another quarter million Burmese to look after.

Despite their limited resources the Government and people of Bangladesh have spared nothing in the way of funds or manpower resources and materials to help the refugees. Now the monsoon has broken. There are growing fears that Bangladesh will be unable to cope with this vast problem alone and unaided. If the international community does not respond positively and quickly, there may well be a refugee tragedy as great as any witnessed in this century.

Amid the continuing catalogue of national calamities and reports of man's inhumanity to man which haunt our collective conscience, people everywhere retain their capacity for anger and indignation. In the refugee camps of south Bangladesh, urgency is the keyword; and for this reason Eastern Times prints the first authoritative account to appear outside Bangladesh of a defenceless people's suffering and peril.

*Nearly every young woman claims to have been raped by soldiers.*

They say it takes the poor to help the poor; and when the refugees from the Arakan region of Burma came flooding over the border into Bangladesh, it was the local peasants who first held out a hand.

At the rate of 5,000 a day the Burmese Rohingyas — Muslims living in the area round Akyab — have been arriving in the neighbouring Muslim state with stories of rape, slaughter, pillage and arson committed, they alleged, by the Burmese army under instructions from the government. It has even been given a code name: "Operation Dragon".

At the start of the invasion, towards the end of April, the refugees found what shelter they could under trees and bushes. They immediately began to improvise and officials report that they are remarkably self-reliant.

But within days the local district administration had taken a hand, backed by a vigorous government action committee under Fariduddin Ahmed, joint secretary in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation in Dacca. 'It's a double tragedy,' he said. 'We've got to get the refugees under sound cover before the rains come; and it's also a tragedy for the local inhabitants who

are now unable to cultivate their land or graze their livestock.'

The indigenous population of the area in fact numbers not more than 100,000, less than the mass of refugees who are now their neighbours.

Volunteers from medical schools and the international aid agencies, together with specialists in hygiene from the Bangladesh Army's medical branch, have formed twenty three medical teams. A campaign of mass inoculation against cholera and smallpox is well under way.

'But this is a problem for a poor country,' said Secretary Ahmed. 'All pharmaceuticals have to be imported. We have drawn on government stocks but must look overseas for more assistance.'

Bernard Zagorin, resident representative of the UN Development Programme in Dacca, said that intravenous fluids were urgently needed to provide the rehydration needed if dysentery and cholera were to break out in earnest.

**Disease:** So far the health of the refugees has been amazingly good. At Nhila camp, the most southerly of the ten camps the government has set up, there were more than 27,000 people at the time of our visit, although many had been



He belongs to Burma but Burma does not want him because he is a Muslim.

moved to other camps up country to make room for the continuing influx. There have been only 26 deaths there in four weeks mostly among very young children, from dysentery and exhaustion. There have been two cases of cholera at Leda, perhaps the most primitive of the camps. It is close to the border, with no locally available water.

Disease is under control. For the moment. Volunteers are working round the clock. We saw teams of medical students who had given up their vacation to help. These young men, with their colleagues from the Army and the Bangladesh Red Cross were operating under near impossible conditions and virtually incoherent from fatigue. How long can they keep it up?

**Self-reliance:** Dr Viggo Olsen, American chief of the Memorial Christian Hospital outside Chittagong, has taken many of the more seriously ill of the refugees. He told us that he has never seen a relief operation in the region — where he himself has worked for seventeen years — mounted with such dedication and organisation. Bangladesh needs outside help — but the authorities and the people are determined to use their own resources of manpower, skill and will to the full — a notable expression of the country's new-found spirit of self-reliance.

First supplies from outside came from the UK sent by Oxfam via the Royal Air Force. It consisted of sanitary equipment and building materials for up to 85,000 of the displaced persons. The government is releasing food and drugs from stock to bridge the gap until more overseas aid comes in. Bernard Zagorin himself has now flown to Geneva to report and to hustle up the international relief effort.

But the conditions of the refugees, even at best, are wretched. Living in unimagin-

ably crowded conditions, hundreds together in low bamboo-and thatch sheds, with water struck from emergency wells, life even in dry weather is stark. When the rains come, it will be impossible. The need for shelter is paramount.

**Who are they?:** The Rohingyas are Muslims who settled in the Arakan region of Burma over many generations. The Bangladesh authorities point out that they are registered Burmese citizens. They all carry registration documents issued by the Burmese government and are ready and anxious to show them to any visitor. One old man told us that he had been in the Burmese army for seven years as a cook. He had his discharge papers with him. Others had held minor positions in local Burmese administrations.

**Why the exodus?** Terror, say the refugees themselves. Nearly every young married woman claims to have been raped by soldiers of the Burmese army. At Niila we spoke to several dozen. The army, we were told, had broken into houses, usually in the middle of the night on the pretext of a document check. The young unmarried men and women were herded away — it was noticeable that few if any were visible in the four camps we visited.

Several patients had been operated on in Bangladesh medical centres for gunshot wounds and bodies had been discovered in the Naaf river between the two countries.

Camp administrators and police told us that they see houses burning every night across the frontier.

In Dacca many reasons for the Burmese drive are given. The refugees are small-holders and, by peasant standards, in a fair way of business. According to this scenario, the Burmese policy is one of expropriation of land which is then redistributed to the non-Muslim population. Others see in this a straightforward programme of de-Muslimisation by the Burmese.

A further view is that the young men and women are being held in Burma as forced labour for the military road schemes now being actively promoted by the government. Many hold that the whole campaign is devised by the Burmese administration to distract its people from its own political and economic difficulties.

**The Burmese version:** The story from Rangoon is sharply different. There is no 'Operation Dragon', merely a normal check of documents. A spokesman at the Burmese Embassy in London has emphasised that Burma, as a Buddhist state ensures that all religious groups, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and others, live amicably together and that religious tolerance is enshrined in the constitution.

There is no threat by the army, he said. It is a fabrication of the media.

The census-taking, he went on, is part of a policy to build a foundation for future economic growth and with solid statistical data. It has been carried out in all the border areas, to identify illegal immigrants. The fact that these people so readily left their homes shows that they are illegal immigrants and ran away as soon as the check began.

As far as one can judge on the spot, this Burmese statement does not seem to hold good. The refugees we spoke to, many of them resident in Burma all their lives, were all holders of Burmese certification.

**Diplomatic moves:** Tabarak Husain, Foreign Secretary in the Bangladesh Government, told *Eastern Times* in Dacca that his government is still doing its best to restore neighbourly relations with Burma. He recalled that Burma was the first country visited by President Zia on his assumption of power, Zia promised friendship and co-operation and the maintenance of a peaceful border.

While Bangladesh is doing all it can to alert the world community to the disaster, he was adamant that his government would do nothing to inflame the situation. But the expulsion of these people is on the flimsiest of pretexts. The idea that citizens whose families have been three or more generations in Burma can be classified as illegal immigrants is clearly untenable — is a violation of the Declaration of Human Rights.

The Burmese government has repeatedly been asked to stop the harassment while negotiations proceed but so far there has been no response from Rangoon. Indeed, the flow of refugees is still strong. Mr Husain pointed out that there are in fact Hindus amongst the refugees. There appears to be a clear element of

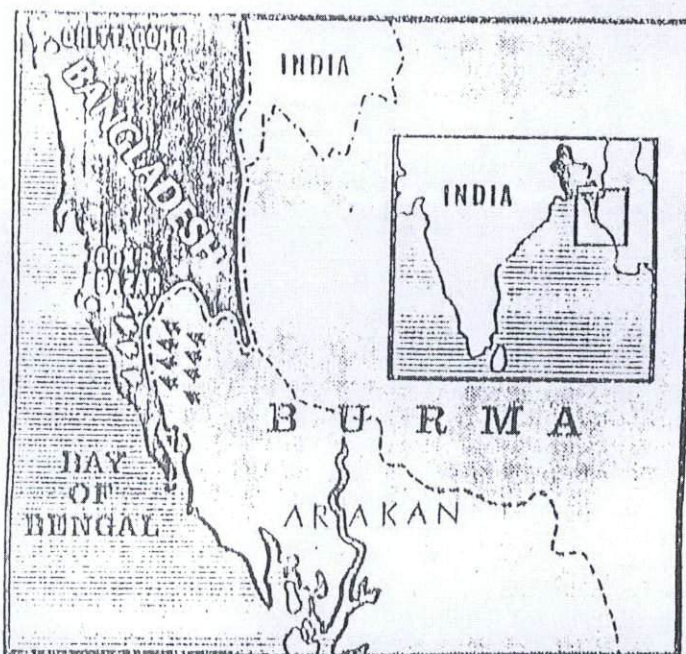
xenophobia in the campaign, in spite of protestations of the Burmese government for equal rights for all religious observance.

'This is' Mr Husain went on, 'all the more surprising since Burma professes a Buddhist faith based on tolerance and brotherly love. In fact, there was a notable Burmese Secretary-General of the United Nations — U Thant. Bangladesh has its own Buddhist minority in the affected border regions and they live in complete harmony with their Muslim neighbours.'

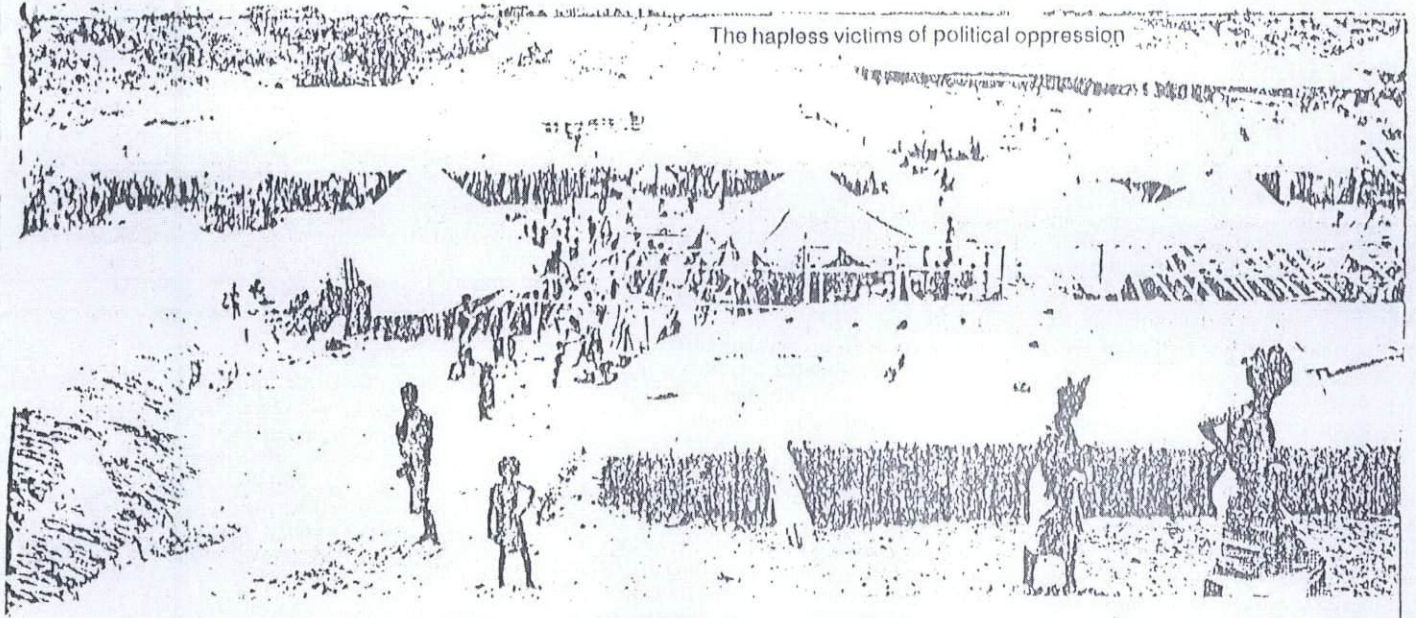
**Action now!** What is evident in all this international name-calling is that the refugees cannot stay where they are. Their presence is costing hard-pressed Bangladesh \$1 million a week, merely to provide a subsistence diet and basic living accommodation. Another million dollars were expended on the establishment of the camps.

So far \$200,000 have been allocated as an emergency measure from UN agencies, while the Canadian government has given a further \$200,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva. Secretary Ahmed of the Bangladesh Emergency Committee said that transport costs are proving enormous since vehicles must mainly be hired through commercial channels. They are managing to supply subsistence rations to the refugees at about 1,300 calories a day, supplemented with high protein biscuits from the Salvation Army. But signs of malnutrition are beginning to appear.

The United Nations, on the basis of the report given by Jim Howard, *Oxfam* representative in the area, has now formally adopted these people as 'official refugees' and has allocated \$500,000 for immediate relief. *Save the Children Fund* is involved, as are many national Red Cross organisations, together with the International Red Cross.



The hapless victims of political oppression





## BANGLADESH

# A new blight on the border

By A Correspondent

Dacca: Politics, greed and penury are feeding on the distress of the ethnic Bengali refugees from Burma. By protesting over what it alleges is the forced exodus of Muslim refugees, the Government here is taking up a popular issue and is acquiring support from Middle East countries.

Some relief supplies are being diverted to the black market or are being smuggled into Burma. At the same time, poverty-stricken Bangladeshis living in areas in which refugee camps have been established are flocking to them in search of plastic sheeting (an expensive item locally), canned foods and other useful items. Oxfam responded to refugee distress with a Boeing 707 charter aircraft containing 6 million pieces of plastic sheeting.

The border area has always been ill-defined and movement across it has been frequent. People from the Chittagong area of Bangladesh have traditionally crossed into Burma for paddy planting and harvesting, working as labourers for the Burmese. At the same time a significant smuggling trade has emerged in response to the lack of consumer items in Burma (Review, May 19).

Local residents of Cox's Bazar, near Chittagong, say people from Burma often came to Bangladesh and even travelled by public transport to Dacca to shop for consumer items to be sold on the Burmese black market.

In addition, immediately after the war which led to the creation of Bangladesh, a significant number of pro-Pakistani individuals crossed into Burma to escape retaliation. It is rumoured that most were taken by boat from Rangoon to Karachi, while others eventually returned to Bangladesh.

It is reasonable to assume that a proportion of this sizable outflow of Bangladeshis remained in Burma. Consider-

ing the comparative population densities on either side of the border it can also reasonably be assumed that some Bangladeshis probably crossed over in search of land and survival.

The area next to Bangladesh is Arakan state. The estimated 2 million population is divided equally between Muslims (mostly belonging to a group called Rohingya) and Buddhists (predominantly a group called Maghs). Historically these two groups have been incompatible.

The Rohingyas claim that they are being gradually pushed out of their land by the Maghs. They also claim that the Burmese Government has supported Magh attempts to eliminate them.

This Rohingya Muslim opposition to



Refugees in Bangladesh: Incompatible.

Rangoon has apparently taken to insurgency, involving clashes with government forces. Some of these more militant refugees allege that they had made agreements with the BCP (Burmese Communist Party — the strongest anti-government insurgent group in Burma) to allow the party freedom of operation within Arakan in exchange for 50% of the arms and ammunition captured from government forces.

Other alliances have apparently been formed between the Arakan insurgents and the host of Burmese insurgent groups. On this analysis, Rohingyas are a far cry from the innocent victims of government repression that the Bangladesh press makes them out to be. Asked why the refugees did not fight back when attacked by government troops,

one refugee said that they had indeed ambushed and killed six government soldiers.

Two treason trials have taken place in Burma recently, one involving a conspiracy to create an Independent Arakan State. The military attache at the Bangladesh Embassy in Rangoon was allegedly implicated in the affair. Rangoon maintained that the Arakanese planned to opt for a "union with Bangladesh" after achieving independence. So there is understandable sensitivity over the Arakanese refugees.

Arakanese have been moving into Bangladesh for at least two years. The current influx apparently began in late March. Dacca estimates the total number of refugees at 70,000-100,000. Some foreign observers believe the number of people actually staying in the camps is 50%-70% less than this official estimate.

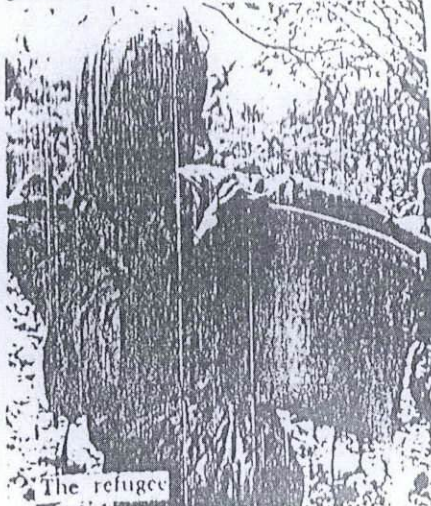
The camps themselves appear adequate. The shelters are of grass and bamboo, materials used by all poor people

in the area. International visitors to the camps report that the refugees are in good health and have good morale. No gunshot wounds were seen, despite the numerous reports of wounded people.

The most striking feature of the refugees, according to these reports, is the absence of young men and women between the ages of 15 and 30. The refugees explained that the Burmese soldiers had kept all the girls for pleasure and the young men as labourers. But some observers wonder why, if young men were barred, the soldiers allowed cattle across the border.

One of four young men in one camp claiming to be Rangoon University students and speaking fluent English talked to an observer about the "Rohingyan struggle for human rights" and its relationship to the struggle in the Philippines and past struggles in Vietnam against "fascist governments." Three of these students boarded a bus headed for Dacca, the observer reported.

All the refugees seemed to be carrying bundles of personal effects, some of which contained cooking utensils. Others carried wooden chests. All were dressed better than the average Bengali farmer. Some enterprising Bangladeshis were purchasing refugees' cattle at a fraction of their value. Others were making money by ferrying the refugees across the Naf River, the boundary between the two countries at Bangladesh's southernmost point.



The refugees

## The Region

Crises

# Drugs, Rebels & Refugees

Monsoon torrents last week turned makeshift refugee camps near Bangladesh's border with Burma into quagmires, a fitting enough adjunct to one of the muddiest quarrels yet seen in the neighbourhood. At the same time, the initial reluctance of the two governments to move towards a solution was spawning rumours that there were forces at play beyond the control of either.

The population in the camps continued to rise: this week's official count was 180,000. International relief agencies, including those of the United Nations, had swung into action, but hastily improvised sanitary and health arrangements were suddenly submerged by the rains. Diarrhoea and fever were spreading. Three months after Muslims who call themselves the Rohingya began spilling out of Burma's Arakan region, the official death toll in the camps passed the 200 mark.

The U.N., which had already spent \$1m. in relief work, was hammering out

a six-month operational plan. Several Arab countries were also pitching in: a delegation of Arab experts arrived in Bangladesh to investigate the causes of the problem. Saudi Arabia announced a US\$20,000 grant to buy food.

Ironically, news that relief goods (milk powder, canned food, biscuits) were going free in the camps attracted thousands of poor people from nearby areas within Bangladesh. The virtual absence of controls in many camps enabled them to mix with the refugees and claim the handouts. Even families from Burma who were not involved in the exodus were said to have entered the camps briefly to get a piece of the action. According to some sources, enterprising Bangladeshis hired boats to the overnight "refugees" at suitably inflated rates.

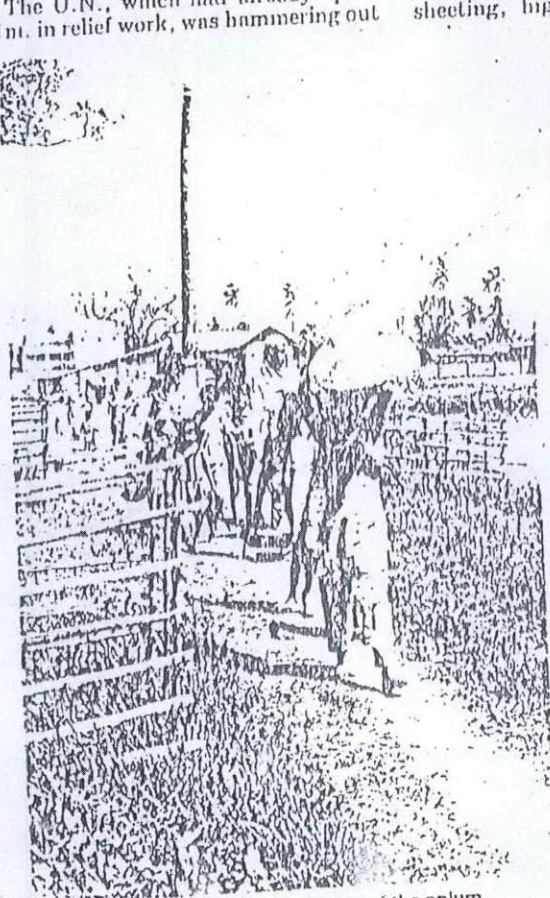
Commercial agents were said to be mingling with the refugees, looking for items of special interest. A British organisation chartered a Boeing 707 to bring in some 6 million pieces of plastic sheeting, highly priced locally. Said

one Western observer: "I expect it will find its way into the Dacca and Rangoon markets soon."

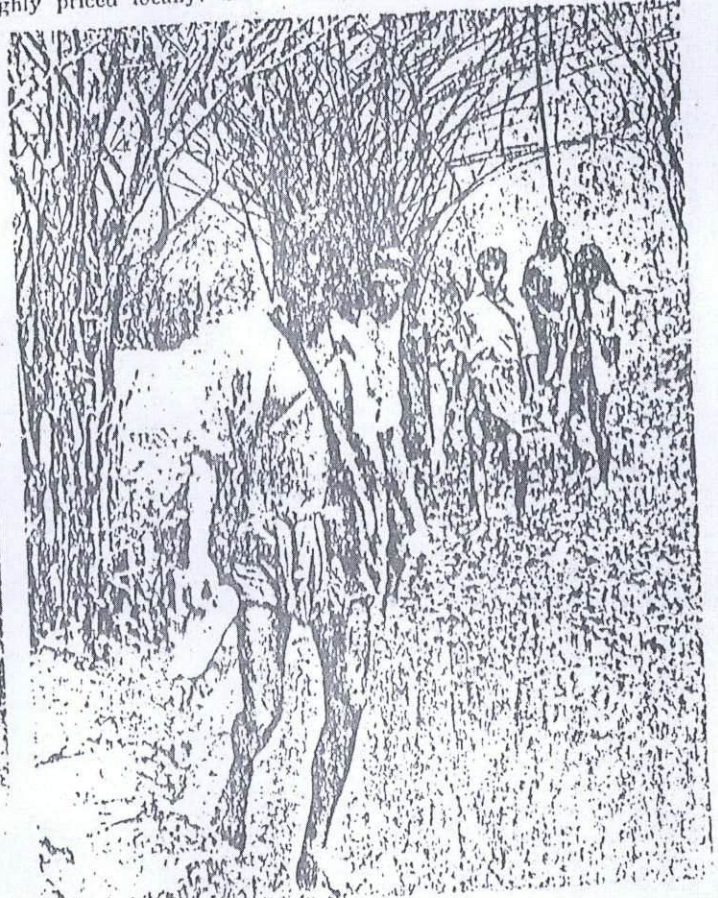
Local officials say they are aware of what is going on around the camps. But they are unable to do much about it in the absence of effective administrative machinery to enforce discipline. Besides, the government is keen that it be seen to be distributing the relief material it is receiving.

However, relief agency officials are unable to determine how long the crisis might last because they still have no clue as to its origins. The Bangladesh government last week issued a long statement directly accusing Burma of persecuting an ethnic Muslim minority. "De-Muslimisation of the Arakan province appears to be the central theme of this policy," it charged.

But other observers in the border region pointed to "strange goings-on." One source, who had worked in the area even before the crisis burst open told ASIaweek: "There are insurgents in the camps who have admitted ambushing



Refugees in Bangladesh: Jungle moonlit the opium trail: A mixture of liberationists



## Bangladesh and Burma

## Another ejection of humanity

FROM OUR SUBCONTINENTAL CORRESPONDENT  
Cox's Bazar

Any refugee who selects impoverished and authoritarian Bangladesh as a sanctuary to flee to must be desperate indeed. More than 150,000 Moslem Rohingyas, who have farmed alongside Buddhists in the Arakan province of western Burma for generations, are apparently that desperate. Bearing gruesome tales of atrocities committed by advancing waves of Burmese soldiers, 5,000 more were arriving every day last week, streaming up the muddy road from the Naf river frontier and into 10 camps set up by the bewildered Bangladesh government.

This is the latest of Asia's refugee problems, and in its combination of sheer size and suddenness is perhaps as bad as the huge exodus from communist Indochina. The United Nations, which waited some time before designating the newcomers as refugees, presumably for fear of offending the Burmese government,

Buddhist Mogh tribesmen of the Arakan hills were forcing them off their lands and out to the west. Like so much of Burma, Arakan is a region that enjoys periodic bouts of xenophobia: Moslems poured out in the 1940s, again in the next decade and, in relatively small numbers, as recently as five years ago, leaving behind a Moslem population estimated at 11m. But there has never been an exodus on this scale before.

Rohingyas believe themselves to be Burmese, though in ethnic terms they are people of the Ganges. They speak not Burmese, but the Chittagonian dialect of Bengali which is also spoken in the south-east of Bangladesh. They are Bengali in appearance too—and, of course, they worship Allah. Most of them percolated into Burma when the entire region was one, under the Raj. They acquired land, built houses, farmed quite successfully—and in lean years attracted more than their fair share of Mogh resentment.

It is still not clear what caused the latest migration. The Burmese government offers the time-worn explanation of a census check—Operation Dragon King, they called it, when census officers



- 1-Opium looking for a route
- 2-Liberationists looking for a base
- 3-Muslims looking for a home

and killing Burmese police while 'escaping' to Bangladesh." Also, he said, a lot of poor and landless people in the Chittagong hill tracts had disappeared amid reports that Burmese Muslim insurgents had begun operating training camps in the area: "It looks like some sort of an emerging alliance between Burmese communists and Bangladeshi and Indian border insurgents."

No less ominous for government leaders in the region is another theory that centres on the drying-up of the traditional opium route through Laos and Thailand. According to this view, the Arakanese, in collaboration with the Shans and the Karens of Burma, are attempting to open a route through Bangladesh. Even if this is not what precipitated the crisis initially, says one well-connected source, it could be a major consequence if the situation is allowed to continue indefinitely.

In an apparent bid to forestall such a denouement, Rangoon and Dacca began making some belated feelers for peace this week. Col. Aung Htay, Burma's Deputy Information Minister, declared that the problem should be settled by friendly bilateral talks. Rangoon also formally replied to a Bangladesh note and said it "shared the concern" Dacca felt over the border situation.

Seizing that statement as a positive sign, Dacca announced that a delegation led by Foreign Secretary Taharak Husain would leave for Rangoon next week in search of an agreement. Both governments seemed anxious to contain the problem before third parties moved in. But whether the assorted liberationists of the three-country border region and the hardy drug merchants of the Golden Triangle would let them was another matter.



Moro babies for Bangladesh

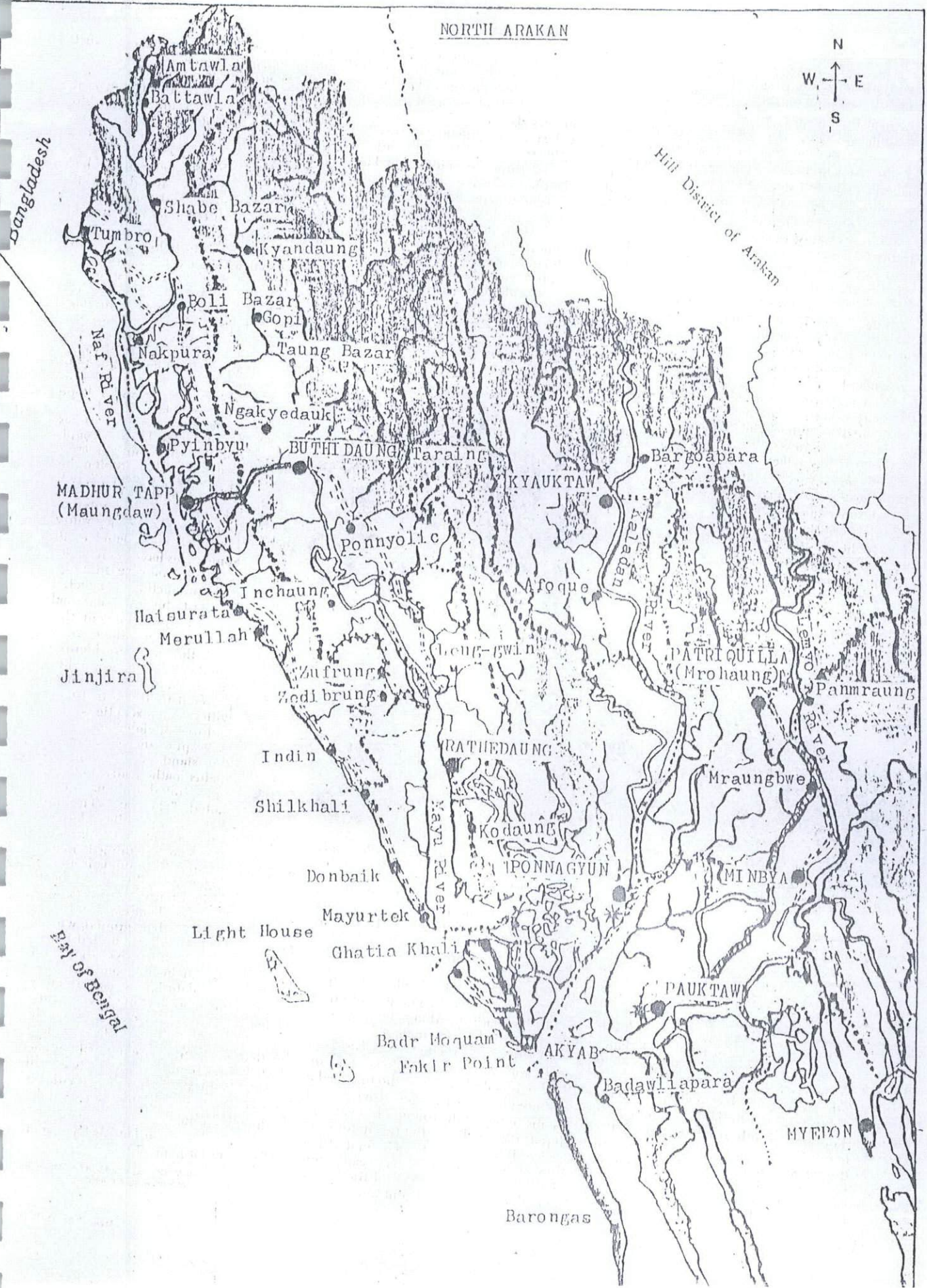
has now appealed for aid. The military government of Bangladesh, which has extended a courageous welcome to its fellow Moslems, is now, after a diversionary election campaign, settling down to grapple with the problems they have caused.

The trickle that was to become a tidal wave began in March, when groups of fearful Rohingyas paddled across the Naf river, telling Bangladesh border guards that, as on so many occasions in the past, the Burmese army and the

fanned out over Arakan last January. The government says that only illegal immigrants with no firm standing as Burmese citizens were "asked to leave".

One fairly plausible reason for the swoop, put forward by disinterested Asian diplomats in Dacca, is that the army action is a follow-up to a trial of Arakan secessionists that took place in Rangoon last year, and resulted in two Arakanis being executed for treasonable activity. Evidence at the trial is said to have pointed to the involvement of some

(B)



Moslem Burmese in Arakan "liberation" agitation. It was subsequently "discovered" that the Bangladesh military attaché in Rangoon, a Colonel Amin, had "links" with the liberationists (who would like Arakan to be affiliated to Bangladesh, or to form an autonomous unit within a Burmese federation). The attaché was suddenly expelled, persona non grata, from Burma, and the ruthless application of Dragon King in the turbulent province began. The Bangladeshis deny any involvement with, or interest in, Arakan separatist thinking.

The tragedy on the road from the border to Cox's Bazar is straining the resources of Bangladesh and the relations between the two poor neighbour nations. A high-level Bangladesh delegation flew to Rangoon on Tuesday to try to work out a diplomatic solution while Land-Rovers from Oxfam and Unicef and the World Food Programme were still on their way down to the camps. But it is the thought of all the other Moslems in Burma that most frightens observers here. It would not take much more than a straw to break the back of Bangladesh; 1m more mouths would be a mighty straw.

Nearly 200,000 have crossed the River Naf during the past two months and the mass exodus shows no sign of letting up: as many as 3,000 Rohingyas are leaving Burma every day.

They describe the life they left behind as one of horror. Sayed Alam, 25, a carpenter, tells of Burmese soldiers kicking down the door of his house and demanding his registration papers. When he said that he had none, his wife, Badur Zaman, 22, was carried into the jungle—and raped. When Abul Kalam was also unable to produce identity papers, a soldier jabbed him with a machine gun and snarled: "I could have you shot." Sultan

an effort to quash a Rohingya secessionist movement, and anger at their increasing domination of the economy in their home state of Arakan. Whatever the cause, it seemed that Ne Win, as one diplomat in Dacca put it, had "decided that the time was ripe to settle his problems with the Rohingya minority."

Ne Win's policy of persecution has created other problems. Bangladesh officials are incensed, and relations between Dacca and Rangoon have turned sour. A high-ranking Bangladesh official calls the purge of the Rohingyas "nothing less than a hostile act." Eager to put an end to the exodus, a delegation led

by Foreign Secretary Tarbarak Husain flew to Rangoon last week. "We are trying to solve this problem amicably," explained Bangladesh President Ziaur Rahman. "The refugees are Burmese nationals and I hope Burma will take them back."

Advances: That hope was based on the blunt recognition that they could create a near-insoluble problem for Bangladesh, a country that still is struggling to lose its reputation as "an international basket case," as Henry Kissinger once labeled it. Some gains have been made. A steady increase in food-grain production is expected to boost the gross national product by 8 per cent this year. Last week, the country held the first presidential election in its seven-year history. President Ziaur won 77 per cent in a vote that was, with some exceptions, fair and free of violence.

Despite these advances, the standard of living remains pathetically low. As one United Nations officer noted: "There are 60 million homeless, penniless, largely illiterate people in this country. The last thing it needs

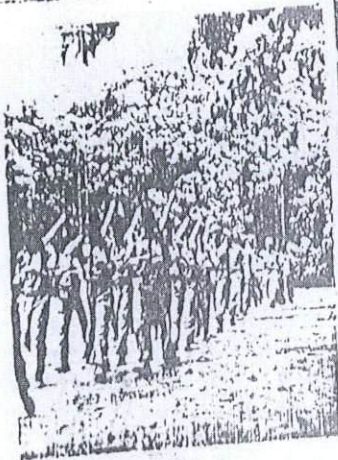
are 200,000 more." With funds from the U.N. relief agency the Rohingyas have been settled into ten makeshift camps. They live in huts of bamboo and thatch, eating little more than ground wheat. More than 300 people have died in the camps, primarily from dysentery and pneumonia, and health conditions are expected to deteriorate considerably now that the monsoon rains have begun.

Even so, the Rohingyas continue to cross the river. One night last week, a boatload of 30 refugees landed in Bangladesh. Behind them, three separate fires lit up the night sky as Rohingya villages were put to the torch. But not one of the bedraggled refugees even glanced back for a cursory look at the land that had been their home for generations.

—SUSAN DRAKE with BARRY CAME in the Rohingya refugee camps



Rohingyas in Bangladesh camps: Nowhere else to go



## REFUGEES:

### The Forced March

"I am Burmese," insists Abul Kalam, a 29-year-old schoolteacher. "I was born in Burma. So was my father. So was his father. My family has been in Burma for 1,300 years." No longer. Along with thousands of other members of a Burmese Muslim minority known as the Rohingyas, Kalam has fled from his homeland into neighboring Bangladesh to escape a brutal Burmese Government campaign of harassment—and torture.

Almad, a 70-year-old farmer, was routed from his home one night to find the village mosque ablaze and a company of soldiers rampaging through the town. His daughter and son-in-law were seized and he has not seen them since. Almad trudged across 40 miles of jungle, swamp and rice paddles with his 60-year-old wife, eight children and thirteen grandchildren to reach Bangladesh. Along the way, one grandson died of pneumonia.

The Rangoon regime has dismissed such stories as "exaggerations" told by "Bengali bad elements" who opposed a nationwide census the government claims to be conducting to discover and deport illegal aliens. But the Rohingyas accuse Burma's dictator, General U Ne Win, of mounting a systematic campaign of terror to drive them out of Burma for several reasons: a persistent xenophobia,

# And still they come!

## Malaysia move to solve refugee problem

Following talks in Rangoon between Mr Tabarak Husain, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary and Tengku Tithauden, Foreign Minister of Burma, it has been announced that Malaysia has offered its good offices in an attempt to resolve the dispute.

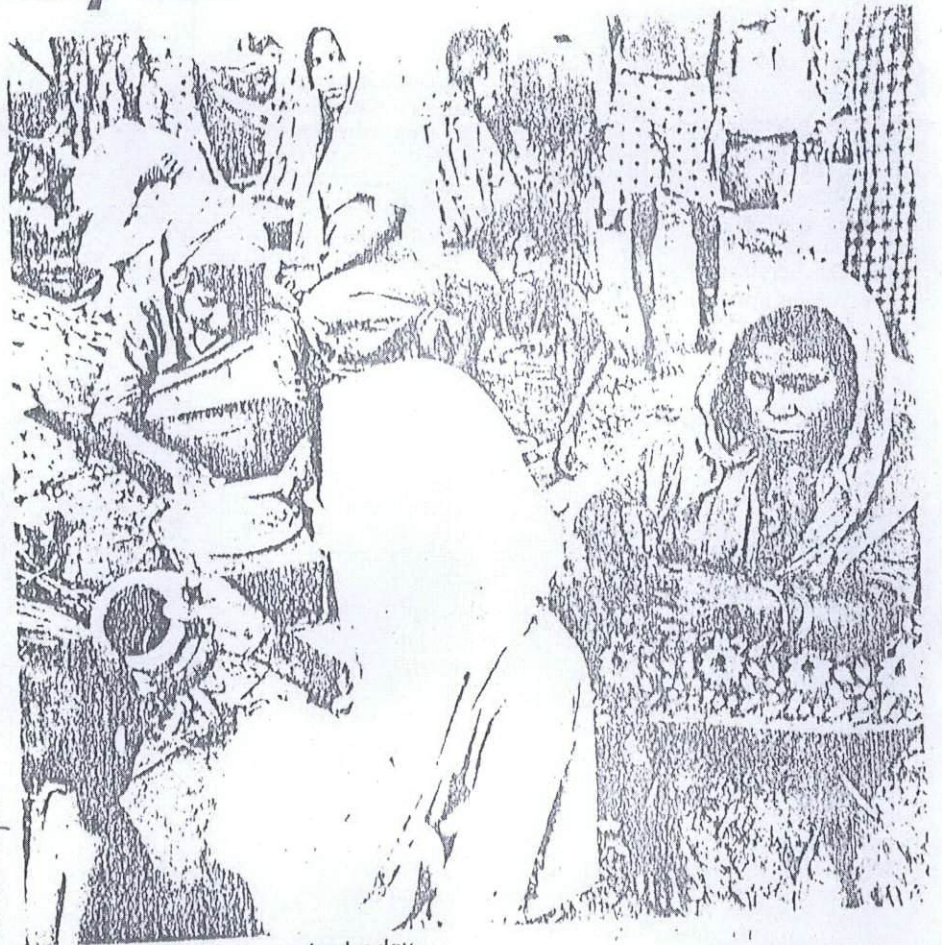
The Rangoon talks were described as amicable and extremely useful and Mr Husain, now back in Dacca, said that Burma recognised the seriousness of the situation. The monsoon is now open in the area and living conditions for the 200,000 refugees are now becoming as difficult as was predicted. The Bangladesh government says that refugees are still coming across the border at the rate of about 3,000 a day.

World aid for the refugees is beginning to arrive in force. The British Ministry of Overseas Development is allocating £750,000 in response to the appeal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This is in addition to the immediate relief supplies which reached Dacca on May 18, the first help from any foreign government.

**Greater urgency:** Saudi Arabia has sent one thousand tents and three thousand blankets. From the FAO the World Food programme has approved food support for ninety days subsistence.



Tabarak Husain—talking in Rangoon.



Living conditions worsen day by day.

And other offers of help from sympathetic governments are still arriving in Dacca.

**Secessionists:** Why has Burma done this? It is a closed society, one very difficult to penetrate. But it seems that the first claim by Burma that these people are illegal immigrants does not hold good, at least as the phrase is known in most of the world.

Does this, perhaps indicate a serious rift in the structure of Burmese society? It is noteworthy that, as soon as the reports of the plight of the refugees began to appear in the western media, a series of reports started, datelined Rangoon or Bangkok, calling attention to the incident some months ago when the Bangladesh Military Attache in Rangoon was declared persona non grata for alleged involvement in a plot to give aid and succour to elements in the Arakan area who were plotting to set up an Arakanese State, perhaps to take it out of Burma and into federation with Bangladesh.

**Financial aid:** The Burma Government itself has acquitted the Bangladesh government of involvement in what seems

to have been a mad-brained scheme. However, there are rumours that the Muslim separatist movement is actively supported from Libya, by Colonel Gadhafi.

The respected London newspaper, the Observer reported receiving a proclamation issued by the Muslim separatists and seven other Burmese minority organisations appealing for material and financial aid to help to topple "the tyrannical, barbarian regime in Rangoon".

The Burmese government itself declares that the widely publicised idea that 'illegal immigrants' have been subjected to duress is far from the truth. In fact, says Rangoon, the army has been given the task of guarding the homes of Muslims still in the country against looters.

Burma insists that the developments on their border with Bangladesh are no concern of any Middle Eastern or other Muslim country. It states that it wishes to have direct negotiations with Dacca.

The Malaysian initiative may be a hint before the monsoon rains bring the tragedy of the refugees to the status of a major international calamity.

## REFUGEES

# Arab eyes on Burma's border

By Richard Nattons

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh: Who had ever heard of the Rohingya — or even their homeland the Arakan — before nearly 200,000 of them crossed into Bangladesh over the past two months? The influx is now diminishing, but if the problem is not contained, there is every possibility that in six months' time this obscure Muslim minority may become the world's most pressing refugee issue as up to 1 million stateless peasants cross the Naf River into one of the world's poorest countries.

Moreover, the Rohingya Patriotic Front might itself emerge from oblivion as the fastest rising stock in the Arab world's portfolio of political investments in Islamic nationalism which has already yielded dividends through the Moro National Liberation Front in the southern Philippines.

Beyond the dislocation to Bangladesh's own struggle against poverty, a continuing migration of Burmese Rohingyas could on flame the latent communal tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in the mountainous frontier belt running from Western Burma through the hill tracts of Bangladesh and into the tribal areas of eastern India. This in turn threatens to open a political breach which could quickly attract a number of things: Libyan political capital, Golden Triangle opium seeking new outlets into the world market, and Chinese-backed insurgency which already has a strong foothold in the hill tribes of the Arakan. It is against this backdrop that Dacca officials are anxious to repatriate as many refugees as possible to Burma.

The Burmese claim that "illegal immigrants" have been continuously crossing over from Bangladesh into the Arakan where the grass is considerably greener and wage rates higher. Given a population growth rate of 2.7 million a year and the country's history of famine, few observers in Dacca are willing to dismiss the Burmese claim out of hand. However, the Bangladeshis say that all the 170,000-plus refugees currently registered in the 11 refugee camps along the 60-mile road south of Cox's Bazar are Burmese nationals and should be returned to their territory.

Foreign Ministry officials say they have population statistics to prove that migration from Bangladesh to Burma has been negligible since Liberation. And anyway the Burmese have never officially complained in Bangladesh's seven-year history, Foreign Minister Tobarag Husain told the REVIEW.

Since Tobarag Husain's mission to Rangoon on June 6 the two sides have at least been talking, and he is optimistic that they are working towards practical solutions. The Burmese have conceded that anyone holding a national registration card, a foreign registration card or a union citizenship certificate has the right to Burmese residence. They have accepted Dacca's point that not every refugee may possess those documents.



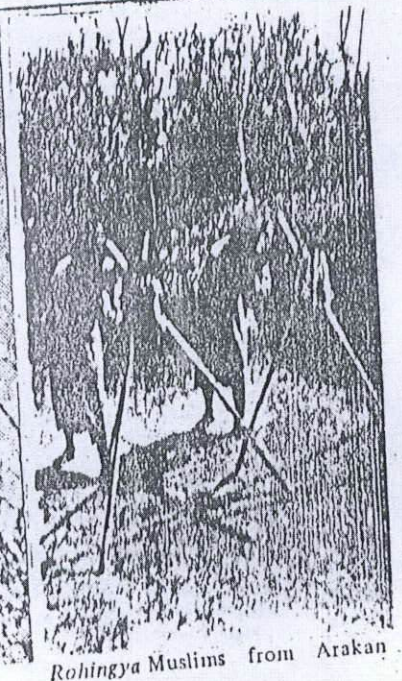
By the lorryload: Burmese in southeast Bangladesh.

This allows Rangoon some flexibility in repatriating the Rohingyas. But they said that when immigration officials conducted a house-to-house check in the Muslim areas, up to 100,000 were missing from their homes on May 27. The implication is that these people could not prove their resident status. Observers in Dacca take this as an indication of Rangoon's bargaining position on the number of Rohingyas the Burmese will consider taking back.

While the negotiations remain fuzzy, the organisation in the refugee camps has improved considerably from their deplorable state six weeks ago. One United Nations veteran of relief operations throughout the world described the camps during the initial phase of a daily influx of 8,000 Rohingyas as "ab-



Rohingya on the border of peace



Rohingya Muslims from Arakan

solite death traps — the worst I've ever seen." But the arrival of the Burmese refugees coincided with beginning of the campaign for presidential elections and many observers in Dacca think the Rohingyas were used by the Awami League as a campaign issue to embarrass the Zia Government.

With Zia now re-elected, UN officials say there are signs of improvement in the camps. Stern martial-law penalties have been introduced to curb corruption and the Government has accepted the supplementary diet of fish protein concentrate, edible oil, sugar, salt and tea suggested by relief agencies. Of the US\$15.5 million appeal launched by the UN to handle 200,000 refugees until the end of the year, US\$7.9 million have been donated so far.

Even if officials from the two countries agree on the means of repatriation, the exodus of Rohingyas thus far has already torn a probably irreparable hole in the tattered ethnic patchwork of Burmese society. Refugees tell of atrocities, rape, indiscriminate arrest, desecration of mosques and razing of villages by Burmese soldiers and local Mogh (Arakanese Buddhist) chauvinists.

It is unclear from this side of the Naf River whether the campaign against the Muslims is a matter of central government policy or just a perverse communal twist added by local Arakanese Buddhist parties to the routine biannual immigration checks of the Rohingya areas. In either case the result is likely to be the same: the Rohingyas are unlikely to accept Rangoon's assurances of safety even, if offered. They will look for security from among their own numbers and seek arms and money abroad.

While the ill-equipped and probably inconsequential Rohingya Patriotic Front has proved impotent in the current crisis, the Burmese Communist Party responded quickly. Some refugees say the communists secured their safe passage up to the Bangladesh border. The communists have also distributed pamphlets calling on the Moghs to stop abusing the Muslims and to join hands with them in the overthrow of the Ne Win Government.

► *Daphne Rangoonwalla writes:* The present exodus of Muslims from Burma to Bangladesh may seem puzzling. But it should be realised that, to a Burman, being Burmese is synonymous with being a Buddhist. Even Burman Christians are not quite regarded as proper Burmese.

The situation in Arakan is somewhat different. The official Burmese explanation of the current activity is that Muslims being sent out are not Burmese nationals but Indian and Bangladeshi citizens who have not been granted permanent resident status in Burma. This may be one important aspect: a propor-

tion of the refugees appear to be Biharis who were severely discriminated against in Bangladesh after the country gained independence. Others are Chittagonians who have traditionally supplied a seasonal labour force.

More broadly, the situation can be seen in the light of the virtual cessation of oil exploration off the Arakan coast — largely caused by the intransigence of the Rangoon authorities in their negotiations with foreign concessionaires — which destroyed the hopes of many Arakanese of improving economic conditions in the state. This was one of the reasons leading to the ill-fated secession movement last year (REVIEW, May 5).

One of the reported aims of the secessionists was to obtain financial and political support from Bangladesh, an objective attesting to extreme political

naivety. However, for some months now Islamic newspapers in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries have been publicising the plight of their depressed brothers in Arakan. It was probably felt in Rangoon that support for a *Jihad* (holy war) could come from this quarter.

Rangoon gossip has it that President Ne Win has a deep personal grudge against Arakanese Muslims, who are said to have thwarted his efforts in establishing himself in business after the war. Yet the main reason for increased military activity in the north is the fear of the resurgence of the Mujahids, one of the main insurgent groups in Arakan from 1948 to 1962, whose attempts to establish a Muslim state were instrumental in the downfall of U Nu's government. ■



Evicted Burmese refugee in other feeds a baby at Kutuqu-  
to camp, 25 miles from Cox's Bazar, not knowing what fu-  
ture awaits.—Times



Editorial

DACCA TUESDAY JULY 11 1978

## Repatriation Of Burmese Refugees

We write to hail the reported agreement between Bangladesh and Burma signed at Dacca on Sunday at the conclusion of the bilateral talks between the leaders of the Burmese and Bangladesh delegations. The agreement, as reported, has been reached on the repatriation of all the refugees now sheltered in Bangladesh. The talks have also been fruitful in a more comprehensive sense in that problems like the demarcation of land boundaries and finalisation of border ground rules have also been as good as solved. This, it must be said, is a great improvement on the situation as it had developed over the past couple of months or so. The Burmese delegation led by the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister U Tin Ohn concluded its most welcome visit to Bangladesh on Sunday and returned home having (to quote the leader of the delegation) 'accomplished his mission'.

The Bangladesh government fully shares the 'satisfaction' caused by the conclusion of a problem that, as we have said earlier editorially, could be settled easily with good-will and understanding on either side. It must be recognised that between two friendly neighbours like Bangladesh and Burma who have been pulling together very well

for all the time, there indeed could be no problems that might react unfavourably on such traditional friendship and good neighbourliness. Bangladesh fully reciprocates the good-will gestures and sentiments expressed in this connection by the leader of the Burmese delegation and the concern felt by Burmese President General Ne Win 'to find a solution of the refugee problem'.

The details of the agreement, we are told, are being worked out and the repatriation of the refugees agreed upon is to start before the end of August. We have always urged the humanitarian aspect of the issue as a strong ground for an early solution of the problem created by the influx of refugees from Burma and sheltered here on humanitarian grounds. It is encouraging that this has been appreciated by the Government of Burma to make possible an expeditious settlement of the issue by the 'willing cooperation' of both governments. We share the view expressed by Mr. U. Tin Ohn that the agreement just reached has furthered the friendly relations between the two countries, which we hope, will continue unruffled by increasing co-operation, understanding and good-will maintained on either side for all time to come.

Rohingya are demanding autonomy



Refugees

# The Other Side of the Rohingya

Fears that a major religious clash involving many countries could develop over the flight of Muslims from Burma to Bangladesh have receded following the visit to Rangoon of a high-powered Dacca delegation. Official circles are tight-lipped about the outcome of the talks, but the reading this week among diplomats is that Rangoon has generally succeeded in establishing its twin postulates — that the affected Muslims are not Burmese and that Rangoon has no moral obligation to absorb them.

However, that is unlikely to improve the plight of some 200,000 uprooted people (Rangoon's figure: 95,000) now living in conditions that monsoon torrents have made abominable. Bangladesh, clearly in no position to provide for such an influx, is hoping

other Muslim countries will come to the aid of the refugees. This follows the sentiment of the Bangladesh liberation war that non-Bengalis are outsiders despite the common bond of Islam. Most of the displaced Muslims are said to have their ethnic roots in India, Pakistan and even beyond.

As Burma sees it, they moved illegally into the Arakan region for mostly economic reasons. The southern tongue of Bangladesh, Rangoon sources say, is especially poor in resources and there is a running temptation for people to cross the open border into Burma's more promising frontier districts. Natural calamities and political disturbances often raise such illegal immigration to the proportions of a flood.

Even before the crisis boiled over, Burmese newspapers had carried stories of a two-way smuggling trade: boats loaded with rice would go from Akyab to areas in Bangladesh and, after selling off the rice, return with illegal immigrants. The resultant swelling of the population in the border districts is what prompted Burmese authorities to launch the Nagamin ("Dragon King") project in Arakan, Chin and Kachin states and in Mandalay and Sagaing divisions.

The Nagamin operation was an attempt by the Immigration & Manpower Department to register citizens and aliens under two separate categories. Predictably, it created panic among those who had moved into the region without authorisation. The "exodus" followed. To check on reports of tension in the area, Rangoon Correspondent U Maung Maung recently visited the towns of Akyab, Buthidaung and Muungdaw and filed this report:

From the minarets of mosques in the townships I toured, I could hear the familiar chant calling the devout to prayer. The sound seemed to support the government's contention that

there was no religious persecution in the area. I certainly saw no sign of antipathy among the non-Muslims towards Muslims.

Any visitor can see that the Muslim population in these townships is significant. According to the 1973 census, 209,873 of Maungdaw's 223,616 people were Muslims while in Buthidaung there were 138,547 Muslims in a total population of 263,317. In Akyab, the capital of Arakan state, Muslims dominate.

The problem is that the proportion of "Chittagong Muslims" among these groups has been steadily rising. As the name implies, these are people who moved into Burma from the Chittagong area of Bangladesh. They have settled down as farmers and fishermen, but many are active in the smuggling trade. They apparently have access to relief goods supplied to Bangladesh, such as clothing and medicine. They also bring bicycle accessories, Horlicks, Ovaltine, biscuits and talcum powder through the well-trodden jungle paths into Maungdaw. In the village of Phone Nye Leik in Buthidaung, all the



Refugees in Bangladesh: Persecution?

people I saw were Chittagong Muslims. Burma looks upon these people as illegal immigrants. It says that many of them have now fled to Bangladesh — not because they're Muslims but because their illegal status was being exposed. Burma does not even concede that they are refugees, preferring the term "fugitives."

While arguments go on at governmental levels, problems on the ground are continuing. People described as "bad elements" are apparently in a position to exploit the situation. Many of them are said to have crept back into Arakan from the camps in Bangladesh. They are certainly keeping themselves busy. On my way back, I saw a village near Buthidaung belching smoke; enquiries revealed that it had been set on fire by some Chittagongians who had returned for that purpose then vanished again.



Muslims at Buthidaung, Burma: "Bad elements" are exploiting the situation

July 14, 1978<sup>93</sup>

**REFUGEES**

**Burma's brand of apartheid**

By William Mattern

Rangoon: Are the 200,000 or more Burmese Muslim refugees now in Bangladesh the victims of a campaign of military terror to drive them out of their homeland in Burma's Arakan state, as they claim? Or are they, as Rangoon retorts, victims of their own self-induced panic in the face of a routine immigration check codenamed the Naga Min Operation?

If the answer is panic, then the Burmese Muslims, called the Rohingya (native born), will become a major refugee problem — but perhaps not a chronically political one — which time, aid, third country asylum and voluntary repatriation will help to diminish.

If, however, the answer is terror, the Rohingya could well turn out to be Asia's Palestinians: a permanently uprooted refugee community, politicized by statelessness and armed by radical Arab countries seeking to spread pan-Islamic nationalism to the East (REVIEW, June 30). Neither Burma, heavily engaged with the communist and minority insurgents in the north, could afford to face a "second front" in

the Arakan; nor would Bangladesh welcome the drain on resources and political tensions of "outsiders" manipulating unwanted refugees.

As usual, the truth lies somewhere between the contradictory claims. It is to be found in the heart of Rangoon, although not in the punctilious legalism of Burma's official position. This truth is spelled out in the small print of a United Nations anti-apartheid poster on display in one of Burma's crumbling monuments to its colonial past, the Strand Hotel.

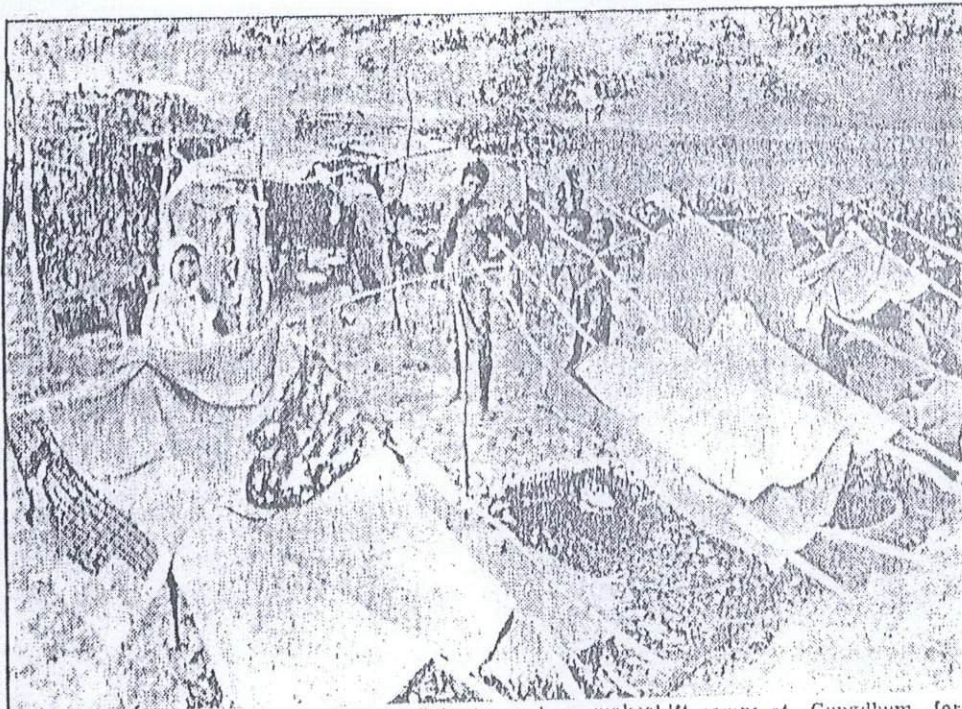
The poster features a black African fleeing the blows of a policeman's truncheon. But the caption could be aptly applied to the historic dilemma of the Rohingya which lies behind their recent exodus. "A refugee," the caption reads, "is a human being who has had to take one of the most difficult decisions ever: to cut his roots. Move. Sometimes out of blind fear because his life is in danger, or simply because he cannot breathe intellectually. Apartheid creates refugees."

Even President Ne Win's most bitter domestic critics vigorously deny the

allegations of "religious persecution, racial discrimination and systematic apartheid" in the Rohingya Patriotic Front's propaganda broadsheets. But for Muslims — particularly those as illiterate, impoverished and isolated as the Rohingya of the Arakan — neglect can come to be perceived eventually as a system of apartheid. No one denies that the Arakan has been ignored by Rangoon in every area, from schools and roads to security forces.

Lying on Burma's western border on the Bay of Bengal, the Arakan is on the far end of the insurgent supply line which originates in upper Burma near the Chinese frontier and the opium trafficking regions of Burma's eastern border with Thailand. The Muslims themselves feel little sympathy for the predominantly Buddhist and Christian ethnic minority hill tribes up in arms against the "greater Burman chauvinism" of the No Win regime. As a result Rangoon has felt able to ignore Rohingya demands for religious teaching, Urdu schools and Rohingya language broadcasts.

Another element in the Arakan's unstable situation is the Buddhist community, who call themselves the Rakhine [pure line of blood] while Muslims call them Moghs [from the Portuguese, meaning pirate]. According to 1973



The Burmese refugees who arrived in Saturday put up makeshift camps at Gungdhun for first night's peaceful living after long arduous trek — Times



Rohingya runaways in Bangladesh: Neglected minority.

population figures the Rakhine are the large majority of the Arakan's 1.6 million population. They look back to the golden age of the 16th and 17th centuries when the Buddhist Arakan empire expanded westward to drive the Muslims out of Dacca and eastward to "hold at bay the rude and barbarous Burmans," to quote an Arakanese nationalist historian.

But the antipathy between the Buddhists and Muslims took its ugliest twist when the communities lined up on opposing sides during the British retreat from Burma. In 1941, realising they had abandoned the Arakan mountains too hastily, the British recruited 10,000 armed Muslims, called the Burma Victory Force, to hold the Myu River Valley — the strategic corridor linking the Arakan and the Bengal delta — and thus delay the Japanese advance. The majority of the Arakanese Buddhists lined up with the Japanese, and the result was one of the bloodiest communal riots in South Asian annals.

**T**HE Muslims' Mujahed Party — the British Victory Force's political and military descendant — remained powerful in the first decade of Burma's independence. But, as a minority in the Arakan itself, the Mujaheds restricted their agitation to demands for self-rule in an autonomous Myu territory.

The Mujaheds managed to strike a deal with the then Premier, U Nu only on the eve of his demise in 1961, and the new strongman, General Ne Win, swiftly set about eliminating the Mujahed leadership already weakened by age, internecine struggle and political compromise. While the Rohingya identity is religious, that of the Rakhine is essentially nationalist. They never forgot Muslim "treachery" during the Japanese "liberation" and viewed the Mus-



lims as a potential fifth column if ever a serious independence movement against Rangoon got rolling.

The armed strength of the Arakan National Liberation Party — popularly known as the Romalas and led by Maung Sein Nyant — is thought to be negligible but the party's sympathy among the depressed and equally-neglected Buddhists of the Arakan is considered widespread. The party received a boost from the break-up of Pakistan when a number of well-to-do and educated Rakhine Buddhists in East Pakistan slipped back to the Arakan. The Bangladeshi Moghs have long been

Romala sympathisers, and have done much to thin out the Muslims with a campaign of propaganda and selective terror.

There have been some scantily-reported events over the past year which might have spurred Rangoon to regard the Arakan as a security threat. Just over two years ago other Arakanese secessionist parties — the Arakan Independence Army led by Tun Shwe Maung and the Arakanese Liberation Party led by Khine Moe Lin — struck up an alliance with the National Democratic Front, led by the Karen tribe. The Front is the most recent in a long series of mostly unsuccessful attempts to hammer out some unity among anti-Burman, anti-communist minority insurgents.

At the recent trial in which two minority leaders — a Karen and an Arakanese Rakhine — were convicted of plotting to assassinate State leaders and foment a secessionist uprising in the Arakan (REVIEW, May 5) the Bangladesh military attache, Colonel Amin Chowdhury, was implicated and quickly withdrawn by Dacca only to be promoted to brigadier.

**D**ESPITE these events, observers in Rangoon say the regime remains unbothered about the Arakan as a security threat, and is far less concerned about Muslim politics than about their numbers. It views the Arakan as flooded by Bangladesh's surplus population crossing the Naf River frontier in alarming numbers each year.

Burma's population and residency records are in chaos and this, as much as anything else, is the cause of the present confusion. Refugees claim that Rangoon has issued neither national registration cards nor foreign registration cards since 1962. Rangoon counters that many cards are falsified or obtained from corrupt officials, and it was to sort out this mess that the Naga Min house-to-house operation was conceived, not only in the Muslim Arakan but throughout Burma's border regions.

It began in the decaying port town of Akyab on February 11 when 200 immigration police flown in from Rangoon moved through the Muslim areas, which had been cordoned off by the army. That night 1,734 were arrested and moved into a rice godown, improvised as a detention centre. The Muslims viewed it as an operation to drive them out of the Arakan. A demonstration in Akyab was put down by force on February 17 and panic spread among the Muslims. As the operation lumbered forward north of Akyab the Muslim population rolled back day by day closer to the Naf River.

The Western Region commander Colonel Min Guang's claim that "not a shot was fired" is probably as much an understatement as the refugees' ac-

counts of wanton rape and looting by the Burmese army are exaggerated. But non-Burmese sources say that the army did little to contain the local Moghs from razing villages and terrorising the Muslims.

If nothing else, the operation has left a political vacuum in the Arakan. The Rohingya Patriotic Front, the new generation of Mujaheds, split when its "armed wing" failed to respond to the crisis. Over the past year the Burmese Communist Party has been able to initiate large-scale operations well outside its traditional sanctuary east of the Salween, partially due to tactical alliances with the minority Kachin Independence Army and Shan State Army.

If the communists fail to move into the breach the Libyans may be expected to. Reliable sources say that some Middle Eastern countries have already contributed funds to Burmese Muslim welfare societies, though more of this cash has been recycled into overseas business than into arms for patriots in the hills. Such possibilities add an urgency to the current Bangladesh-Burmese talks over repatriation of the refugees, an urgency which Rangoon appears not to share, possibly to its long-term detriment.

► *M.C. Tun writes from Rangoon: A delegation from Bangladesh led by the Foreign Minister Tobarq Husain met the Burmese Foreign Minister, Myint*

Maung, here recently but the brief official statement after the talks did not mention refugees. The discussions were said to be "generally encouraging." Problems of mutual concern could be solved bilaterally on the basis of "friendliness and good neighbourliness." The emphasis on bilateralism, and the exclusion of any possible third party, is said to be significant.

In the State-run press Burma has denied persecuting the Muslims. One article said that Burmese Muslims have lived happily with Burmese of other religions for hundreds of years. It recalled that a mayor of Amarapura, Burma's 19th-century imperial capital, was a Muslim. "Why, even one of the 37 traditional deities the Burmese people worship was Muslim during his life on earth."

The authorities took a 28-man press party to the border area and in helicopter trips showed the reporters villages said to have been burned by immigrants from the Chittagong area of Bangladesh. They were told of Muslims praying for help from "Allah, Islamic states and the Americans." Whatever the truth of this story, the reporters saw a demonstration by Muslim women and children who probably thought that the two white men in the press party were Americans. In fact they were Soviet correspondents from Tass news agency and the newspaper *Izvestia*. □



A unit of Army Medical Corps vaccinate Burmese refugees against possible outbreak of epidemic at Gungdhum camp; just half a mile from Bangladesh-Burma border.—Times

## REFUGEES

## Repatriation for the Rohingyas

Burma agrees to take back some but the questions are how many and how many will want to go

By David Majlis

Dacca: After some remarkable diplomatic foot-dragging, Burma and Bangladesh signed an agreement on July 9 covering the repatriation of Burmese refugees now sheltering in Bangladeshi camps. Details were not made known, but the first batch of refugees who crossed the border alleging widespread acts of looting, arson, and rape by Burmese law enforcement agencies on Rohingya Muslims is expected to return home by next month.

How many of the 200,000 will be allowed re-entry by Burma is anybody's guess. Officials here, however, insist that there will be no problem with about 100,000 who, they say, have national registration cards. Some observers put the figure at much lower than 100,000.

Burmese Muslims in the Arakan state of Burma started fleeing in April, pushing the unhappy relations between Dacca and Rangoon to the

limit, and threatening to ignite communal violence in both countries, which have Muslim and Buddhist minorities. As the trickle of hundreds swelled into thousands in late May the United Nations launched a six-month contingency assistance plan.

AS the 200,000 refugees languished in improvised camps, Bangladesh moved for moral support from the world. A propaganda war put the Burmese on the defensive and this could have been the key to its change in stance on repatriation. Knowledgeable sources say that Burma, which would like to open up a little for better exploitation of natural resources, could not afford the kind of world publicity it was getting. Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister U Tin Ohn, who signed the agreement on behalf of his country, said he had been assigned by Burma's President, General Ne Win, to find a solution to the refugee problem.

Under the agreement both sides will appoint representatives this month for talks on land boundaries between the two countries. This issue

was raised by the Burmese when Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary, Tabarak Hossain, led his country's delegation to Rangoon in June to begin exploratory talks on the Rohingya exodus. Also on the agenda this time were border ground rules, which were finalised in the three-day meeting.

The Burmese, who have nagging troubles in border areas concerning various minority groups, wanted an assurance that troublemakers would not get easy sanctuary in Bangladesh. Dacca obliged for at least one good reason: it has its own problem with Chakma dissidents, who have been using Burmese territory as sanctuary from which they raided areas in the Chittagong hill tracts in Bangladesh. Both sides have "therefore agreed to cooperate in preventing the illegal crossing of people between Bangladesh and Burma."

As both countries agreed to offer no sanctuary to each other's troublemakers, it was good logic to come to a settlement on the Rohingya Muslims. However, the number of refugees who actually want to return is now the issue. Many say they lost everything including homes "to marauding Mogh Buddhists" (REVIEW, July 14). Unless they are assured of better treatment in future, it is not easy to imagine many wanting to go back.



Bangladesh and Burma signed an agreement on Sunday for repatriation of Burmese refugees from Bangladesh. Mr Tabarak Hossain, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mr U. Tin Ohn, Deputy Foreign Minister of Burma signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## ROHINGYA REFUGEES' HORRIPILATION

Gruesome tales of Rohingyas' subjugation, oppression, repression and genocide by racist Rangoon regime is no more a secret to the international community. The unprecedented influx of Rohingyas from Arakan into Bangladesh within the short span of the last 4 months has eventually proved to be the last feather on the camel's back. The utter confusion that arose in our minds out of the impasse has very rightly attracted the world attention. Being a problem of international character deserves an overall solution by international co-operation. The macabre action ultimately taken by the indiscreet Government of Burma by forcibly pushing us across to Bangladesh has indeed been a challenge to humanity and in particular the over-stretched economy of the friendly country of Bangladesh.

In the context, H. E. Kacem Zahrri, the Assistant Secretary General of the Islamic Conference, while on a fact-finding mission, said in Dacca, "the Government of Rangoon wants to reduce the percentage of the Muslim population of Arakan. It is also possible that they want to completely eliminate Islam from their region". He also said, "the problem created by the Burmese Government had two aspects: political and humanitarian. It was political because it constituted a violation of human rights and flagrant denial of elementary liberties and freedom, particularly the liberty to continue their living in their own country and in the hearths and homes of their ancestors". He further added, "a concerted international action and co-ordinated efforts were required to assist these unfortunate refugees and abate this inhuman tragedy and ensure their repatriation to their own country". It may also be noted that H. E. Senator Edward M. Kennedy had described it "a serious diplomatic issue that must be of greater concern to the international community and the United States. He appealed to all concerned to help resolve the root cause of the massive refugee influx into Bangladesh. He also urged the US Secretary of State to strongly support the United Nations Initiative and to work directly." H. E. Toha Muhiuddin Marouf, the Iraqi Vice-President while on a visit to Bangladesh said, "it cannot be suppressed as local issue and is having dimension in the perspective of internationalism of this human problem."

However, we heartily felicitate both the Governments of Bangladesh and Burma for the agreement made on July 9, 1978 for our repatriation to our hearths and homes in Arakan. But the fact remains as to how the agreement is going to be implemented.

Time is imperceptibly rolling on. We are still in a terror-stricken position. The time for our repatriation is well nigh. The remembrance of our past sufferings is indelible in our minds. How can we, therefore, get consolation as to what would be the treatment with us after repatriation. Whether it will be in accordance with the international obligations and declarations or as before is still a mystery for us. Our repatriation is a question of our life and death, nay, for entire Rohingya community.

Let the world now sagaciously judge as to whether it will be advisable for us to go to hell!

Nevertheless, humanitarian aid to the refugees, although most welcome, is not a complete solution. A peaceful settlement is essential and indispensable for the restoration of peaceful condition for security without fear of molestation, persecution, death and extermination. Substantially speaking, it needs a viable **POLITICAL SOLUTION** which brooks no delay.

Sultan Ahamed,

(Ex-Parliamentary Secretary, Government of Burma, )  
President,

The Rohingya Refugee Welfare Organisation,  
Chittagong, Bangladesh.

## BURMA

# Refugees to return home

A lot of straight talking and cool patience from the Bangladesh officials went into the parley with the visiting Burmese team to reach a not-too-late bilateral accord in Dacca last week.

It finally defused what was fast becoming a highly charged situation that began nearly three months ago when the first group of 250,000 bedraggled Burmese refugees fleeing the army and police terror in Arakan, in western Burma, crossed into Bangladesh.

The two sides agreed that all the refugees should go back home. The Burmese government on their side of the border will put up 10 reception huts for the refugees, who will start their trek back from the end of August at the rate of 2,000 a day.

What began as a trickle and by early May swelled into a torrent of refugees overwhelmed the Bangladeshi officials by its enormity.

Soon they realised that something has to be done before this enormous incursion of people from Burma turns into one of the worst tragedies of recent times. Initially Rangoon was not very receptive when Bangladesh Foreign Office wanted to bring the matter up for negotiation.

Lived for generations: "There is nothing to talk about, because we don't think Burmese nationals had crossed into Bangladesh," said a high ranking official. After the long wait, refugees go back.

in Rangoon. But the Rohingyas, Muslims from Arakan, told different and more convincing stories when interviewed at checkpoints on the Bangladesh side of the border.

"We have lived in Burma for generations. We were born there and hope to die there. We don't know any other home than the one we left behind," a 80-year-old refugee, Shan Min, from Tharakanmanu in northern Arakan told a reporter at the make-shift refugee camp on the Bangladesh border.

Rohingyas, Burmese Muslims, constitute about 80% of the total population of northern Arakan. It is widely claimed that the Burmese origin of the Rohingyas can be traced to the latter part of the 7th Century A.D., when Arab traders came to preach Islam in Arakan.

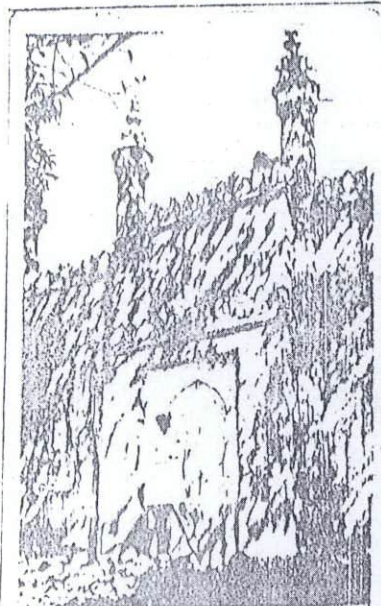
**Plan for repatriation:** A strong international opinion built up in the past months condemned the cavalier operations by Burmese troops and police against the defenceless Muslim villagers in Arakan. An Arab delegation trying to visit the area was refused by the authorities in Rangoon. However, finally officials both from Bangladesh and Burma agreed to work out a plan for repatriating the Muslim refugees.

After signing the agreement Bangladesh Foreign Secretary, Tabarak Hossain said "this was possible due to willing cooperation of both sides to reach a settlement."

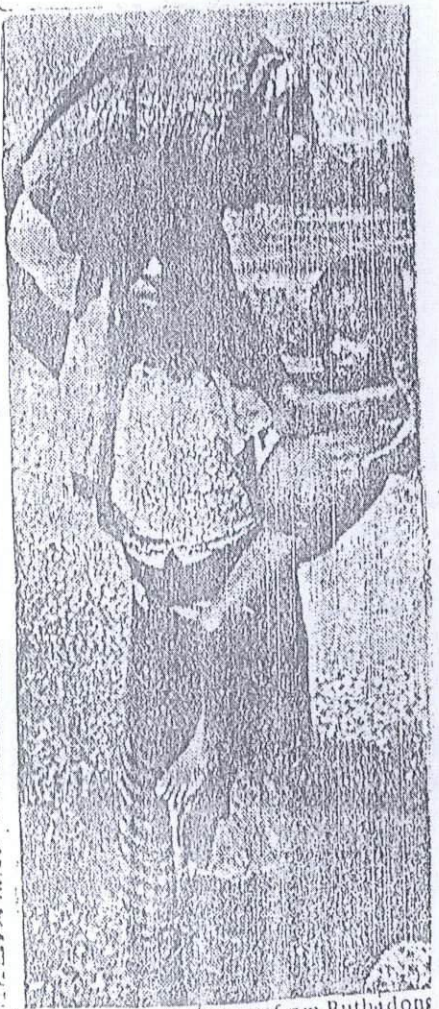
"I have accomplished my mission for which I was sent by President Ne Win, Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister U Tin Ohn said.

It will take at least four months to send all the refugees back home. To look after these Burmese nationals it is costing

Bangladesh government \$250,000 every day, most of which is coming from UN sources.



Old Masjid (Kyauktaw)



Mariam Khatun comes from Buthadong





## ROHINGYA REFUGEES' CONCERN OVER REPATRIATION

It is indeed most heartening to learn through news media over the last few days that the Governments of Bangladesh and Burma signed an agreement on repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Arakan now temporarily sheltered in Bangladesh on humanitarian ground.

We have really no language at our command to express our heartfelt gratitude to both the benign government of Bangladesh and that of our own for the prompt solution of the repatriation of about 3 lakh of our suffering people. But we have been forced under circumstances to think into what might be the detail procedure for implementing the terms of the agreement whatever they might be. In total ignorance of the text of the said agreement the question that naturally arises in our mind is that how this huge number of once uprooted people are again going to be properly rehabilitated in their original home and hearth with the full security of their life, honour, property and dignity without any sort of infringement and impediments in respect of their basic human rights and freedom; for there is a proverb prevalent all over, "A burnt child dreads the fire".

On the other hand, if any lengthy procedure is intended to be adopted for repatriating and rehabilitating them, the sufferings in camps on both the sides might take a death toll of several thousands in addition to those who have already breathed their last on account of malnutrition and pestilence.

At this initial stage it can not as well be rightly presumed as to whether the government of Burma has made any categorical commitment either to Bangladesh or to the advocates of our genuine cause for not violating in future our basic human rights and freedom. It is also not known so far to us as to how and when our home government would compensate our suffering souls and would bring to book the perpetrators of wrongs and injustices upon us prior to our forced exodus across the border to Bangladesh. It is perhaps needless to reiterate the fact that we have always been peace-loving and law-abiding nationals of Burma, but we are compelled to flee the country under intolerable circumstances well known to the world community. God forbid, in the name of repatriation, it might not pave the way for jumping from the frying-pan to the fire. Thousands of us could not as yet be registered as refugees in Bangladesh and so we confidently believe the concerned authorities will spare no pains in repatriating to the last of our people unconditionally which is roughly counted at 300,000 or more that have taken refuge in Bangladesh soil since February last.

In this context, one fundamental thing that has been constantly tormenting us is that in spite of the conclusion of this momentous agreement the exodus still remains unabated. Had there been any congenial atmosphere in Arakan such exodus would never have continued from day to day.

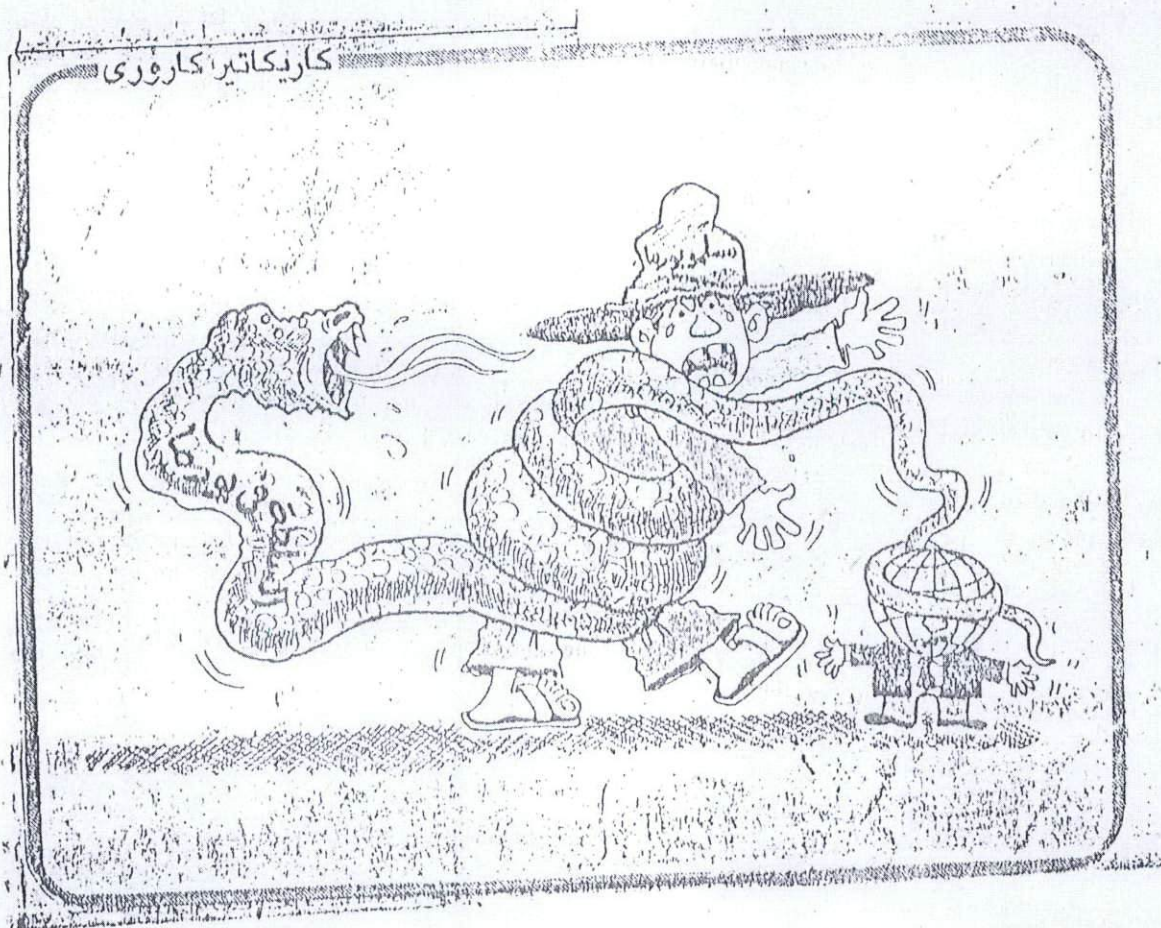
As to how to create a congenial atmosphere over there is, however, the look-out of the Burmese government and at this stage to suggest anything towards that will be nothing but putting the cart before the horse for enough has already been placed before the world in many other ways in the past in respect thereof.

It is however, needless to say that anyone who would be good enough to patiently go through these few lines would certainly be able to appreciate our confusion about the matters in the wake of repatriation and the consequential apprehension arising out of adverse circumstances.

Eventually, in conclusion, we would most fervently solicit governments of Burma and Bangladesh and the World Bodies-particularly the Islamic Countries to see that our legitimate rights and interests are not jeopardised in any manner whatsoever in our own soil in Arakan.

On behalf of the Rohingya Refugees  
in Bangladesh,

1. Sultan Ahmed,  
Ex. Parliamentary Secretary, Government of Burma ;
2. Dr. Abdur Rahim,  
Ex. M. P., Burma ;
3. Muzaffar Ahamed,  
Ex. State Council member, Arakan ;
4. Maulana Mohd. Shafiq Ahamed,
5. Al-Haj Abdul Gaffar,  
38, Bundle Road, Chittagong.



## BANGLADESH



Major-General Ziaur Rahman

### 'The Rohingyea Are Going Back'

In recent months, Bangladesh has been stepping up its efforts to strengthen contacts with Southeast Asia, notably with ASEAN members Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Spearheading these efforts is Foreign Minister Shamsul Haq, who believes his country is well placed, geographically and politically, to serve as a "bridge" between South and Southeast Asia. His boss shares that view: next week, according to officials in Dacca, President Zia ur-Rahman will visit Indonesia for talks with President Suharto.

Zia is expected to seek Suharto's understanding of the Bangladesh position on the presence of some 200,000 Rohingyea Muslims who have poured across the border from the Arakan region of Burma in recent months. That is a subject that has been taking up most of Shamsul Haq's time: early this month he had to cut short an ASEAN tour to return to Dacca for negotiations with his Burmese counterpart on the Rohingyea problem (ASIaweek, July 14); he resumed his tour later, but the revised schedule meant he had to cancel his Indonesia visit.

In a talk with ASEAN Correspondent M.G.G. Pillai, Prof. Haq outlined Bangladesh's attitude towards the refugee influx and other matters. Excerpts from their conversation:

**PILLAI:** What caused the exodus from Arakan?

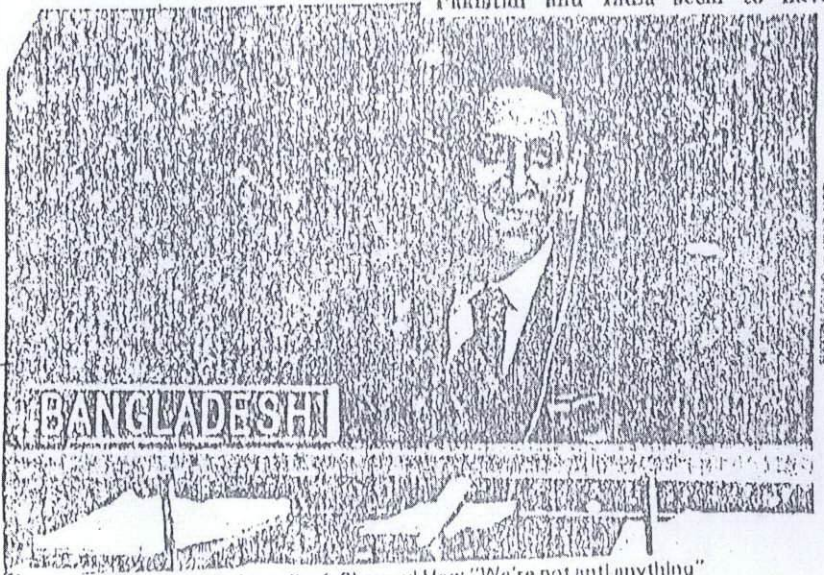
**HAQ:** We don't know, really. We were bowled over by the exodus, by its magnitude; it took us completely by surprise. Bangladesh wasn't physically able to cope with the influx. The

presence of large numbers of people living in refugee tents could create problems for our own stability later on. Burma's version is that it was conducting a nationwide survey of its citizens, for planning purposes, and this included the Arakan area, of course. The refugees claim the Burmese committed atrocities against them, and that they fled in terror. We've no means of checking either version. The important thing is that we've reached agreement with the Burmese government to take those refugees back.

There have been some suggestions that the Burmese survey was linked with a Bangladesh-based irredentist movement. We've heard that some people of Bangladeshi origin were

beginning with those who have certificates that entitle them to be in Burma — whether as citizens or as foreigners. In the first phase, Burma will take those with National Registration certificates and Foreign Registration certificates. Then [the Burmese] will take the rest, including those who have no papers but who can provide evidence of their stay in Burma. Eleven staging camps will be set up, and the return of the refugees will begin on Aug. 30. We don't know how long it will take, but we hope it will take the shortest time possible. According to our records and calculations, every one of the refugees falls into one or another of the categories I have outlined.

Bangladesh's relations with both Pakistan and India seem to have



Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, Prof. Shamsul Haq: "We're not anti anything"

been sentenced to death earlier this year in Rangoon, and that the Bangladesh military attaché in Rangoon was expelled...

It's not true that the military attaché was expelled or declared *persona non grata*. He completed his tour of duty and returned home. The Burmese government has never said this was the reason [for sending security personnel into the Arakan region]. We have made it clear that under no circumstances would we let our territory or personnel be used against the interests of any country, neighbour or otherwise. This is one of those instances in which the media have added up 2 and 2 and come up with 5.

So when will the refugees go back?

We registered all of them as soon as we realised the seriousness of the exodus. The majority were women and children. All of them were born and brought up in Burma, and while not all of them were Burmese citizens, their right to stay in [Burma] was clear.

The agreement with Burma provides for the repatriation of these refugees,

improved. Correct?

Yes, and this might have something to do with the changes of government in both of those countries. Sometimes it's difficult to withdraw from positions that have hardened during years of often acrimonious negotiations. I'm not saying this as a criticism but as an inevitable fact of life.

When both India and Pakistan had new governments, we found it easy to talk to them. With India, for instance, it took about two weeks to sort out the problem of sharing the [waters of the] Ganges, once the matter reached the Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, in April this year. As for Pakistan, the government there has agreed to discuss the possibility of sharing assets. This has been one of the main problems preventing closer ties with Pakistan. Now they have agreed to talk about it. And that's a major step.

Continued to/48

## ROHINGYA REFUGEES' DEMANDS

We, the Rohingya refugees welcome the agreement signed by the Governments of Bangladesh and Burma for our repatriation. But, we are in utter confusion and apprehension because the terms and conditions of the agreement are unknown to us. Over and above, we are filled with fear and frustration whether the Burmese Government will rehabilitate all the refugees in their original hearths and homes.

It may be recalled that we, the Rohingyas, have been subjected to inhuman persecution, suppression, genocide and extermination at the hands of Burmese authorities and repressive functionaries. Prior to Dragon operation about five lakh of our people had already been exterminated who have been languishing in many countries of the world.

Our repatriation is a question of life and death for the entire Rohingya community. And we, therefore, fervently appeal to the Government of Bangladesh, International Community, the United Nations and the Muslim Countries to pressurise the Government of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma to immediately concede to the following demands before repatriation :

1. The Government shall create congenial climate in home (Arakan) to ensure confidence, faith and understanding in the minds of the persecuted refugees.
2. The Government shall call back all armed personnel from and stop forthwith all acts of terror in Rohingya villages and areas and shall in their substitution raise the Rohingya Militia to maintain law and order in the region.
3. The Government shall immediately stop and prohibit all racially discriminatory activities, propaganda, laws, decrees and directives practised by the authorities against the Rohingyas.
4. The Government shall unconditionally repatriate and rehabilitate all the uprooted Rohingyas in their Original Places with adequate compensation under the direct supervision of the United Nations.
5. The Government shall unconditionally release all the Rohingyas, throughout the Union of Burma, who have been illegally arrested, convicted or being tried under the National Registration Act, Immigration Act and the Registration of Foreigner's Act, and shall arrange for the restoration of the forcibly married or converted Rohingyas by non-Muslim residents of Burma and shall rehabilitate them in their original hearths and homes with adequate compensation for the losses sustained.
6. The Government shall immediately release and restore all confiscated Waqf, Trust properties, mosques, Madrasahs and graveyards with adequate compensation for the losses sustained.
7. The Government shall give positive guarantee and categorical commitments to safeguard the Basic Human Rights and Freedoms of the Rohingyas—security of life, property, honour, dignity and the freedom of movement within the borders of Burma.
8. The Government shall employ the Rohingyas in all Government services and shall unconditionally reinstate all the displaced, retrenched or forcibly retired Rohingya Government servants with all facilities and scopes including their back salary.
9. The Government shall provide the Rohingya refugees with all necessary facilities for subsistence till they are fully rehabilitated.
10. The Government shall give guarantee for the freedom of religion—Islam and allow the Muslims of Burma to go to Mecca to perform Hajj and Umrah every year, to freely sacrifice cattle for Korban and offer Juma congregational prayer without any let or hindrance.


- 11 The Government shall unconditionally permit re-entry for all those Rohingyas who were expelled, deported or had to flee the country to escape persecution, and shall rehabilitate them in their original places with adequate compensation,
- 12 The Government shall immediately set up a high-powered Tribunal to find out, impartially try and punish the criminals who committed rapes, murders, kidnaps, loot, arson and destruction of mosques, Madrassas and the Holy Books of Islam and shall make all necessary arrangements for rearing up the illegitimate offsprings of rapes and raped women.

Sultan Ahmed  
 (Ex-Parliamentary Secretary, Government of Burma)  
 President  
 The Rohingya Refugee Welfare Organisation,  
 Chittagong, Bangladesh

Dated August 7, 1978



So-called Repatriation (see translation)



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Rohingyan refugees and the Dragon King

"All refugee problems ultimately political," admits U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Poul Hartling



Newsweek

Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma  
MINISTRY OF HOME & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Translation

REPATRIATES RECEPTION FORM  
(This Form is not National Registration Card)

Serial No. Ma 11/1205  
Date. 27-6-1979  
Name of the Reception Camp -  
Kanyinchaung.  
Township: Maungdaw

1. Name (in full) - RAHMAT ULLAH
  2. Name of father - Alimuddin
  3. Age/Date of birth - 1951
  4. Place of birth - Medl
  5. Distinguishing mark - Joint eye brows
  6. Race - Bengali
  7. Religion - Islam
  8. Male/Female - Male
  9. Occupation - Labour
  10. Previous address (in full) - Maungdaw  
Village Tracts - Kwansibong  
Ward/village - Medl
  11. Present place to be send -  
Village Tracts -  
Ward/village -
  12. National Registration Card No. AK 209842
  13. Foreigners' Registration Card No.
  14. Name of wife (in full) -
  15. List of family members living with  
Name (in full) Male/Female
- |     |           |
|-----|-----------|
| (a) | - - - - - |
| (b) | - - - - - |
| (c) | - - - - - |
| (d) | - - - - - |
| (e) | - - - - - |
| (f) | - - - - - |
| (g) | - - - - - |
| (h) | - - - - - |
| (i) | - - - - - |
| (j) | - - - - - |

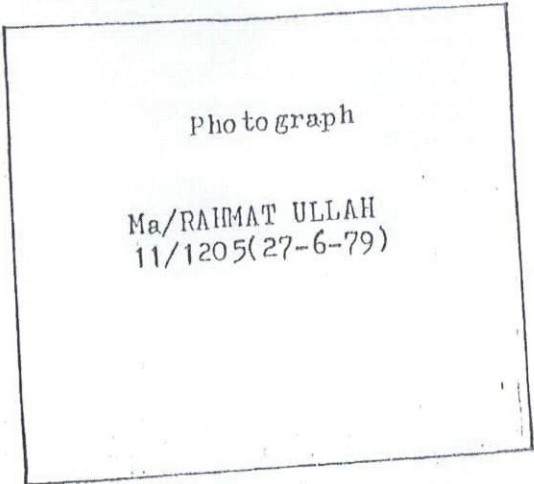
Relation

Inquiry official

Signature - s/d  
Name - Tin Maung Nu  
Rank - Immigration Asstt.

Person inquired

Signature (or) Left thumb  
Name - Rahmatullah  
N.R.C. No. AK 209842



PLIGHT OF THE REPATRIATED BURMESE ROHINGYA REFUGEES

The instrument of agreement between Burma and Bangladesh for our repatriation has made us return to our motherland in a pitiable state of psychological stagnancy. At the Reception Camps the Burmese authorities after making vigorous search and taking family photographs by forcibly removing the Bur'qa or veils from our 'Pardahnasheen' as a shameful sign of disgracing and dishonouring our women provided us with relief provision for 15 days only. Then we are left to confront with the bitterest bitterness of life.

We have passed 15 days repairing our desolated houses and huts and making sheds for shelter. No compensation for our tremendous loss or damage has yet been given us. Nothing worth the name has been done for our rehabilitation. In dire distress we have to toil and mull for our living. We the repatriated refugees have been facing world of insurmountable difficulties and suffering for want of a morsel of food. A day for us now is an age. We are virtually living on leaves. We are dying of starvation and diseases. The extent of our suffering is beyond expression. We are not given any work. We are totally unemployed. We are not able to keep body and soul together. We are as fish out of water. Our starving young men are compelled to labour and carry heavy loads and war materials under duress by the Burmese Armed Forces. The young men are forced to walk long distances through rough and tough routes for days together without food and remuneration. Over and above, no aid is given to repair the broken embankments and dams. No agricultural tools and equipments and other essential things- such as cows or buffaloes, seeds, fertilizer or manure etc. are given us.

The Burmese authorities who are at the helm of affairs have paid no heed to our representation. They disdainfully refused to ventilate our genuine grievances.

We, the repatriated Burmese Rohingya Refugees, therefore, in our absolute helplessness make our ardent appeal to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other World Bodies and Agencies to take urgent steps to assist us in all possible ways and save us from starvation and unnatural death. "Service to humanity is serving to God".

Sympathy cannot help a refugee!

Dt: 28/8/1979.

A Repatriated Rohingya Refugee



UNHCR is the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Our job is to co-ordinate the world-wide voluntary efforts to solve refugee problems.

To give the rights of man back to refugees. The right to work, to education. Freedom of religion. Identity papers. Travel documents. Legal protection.

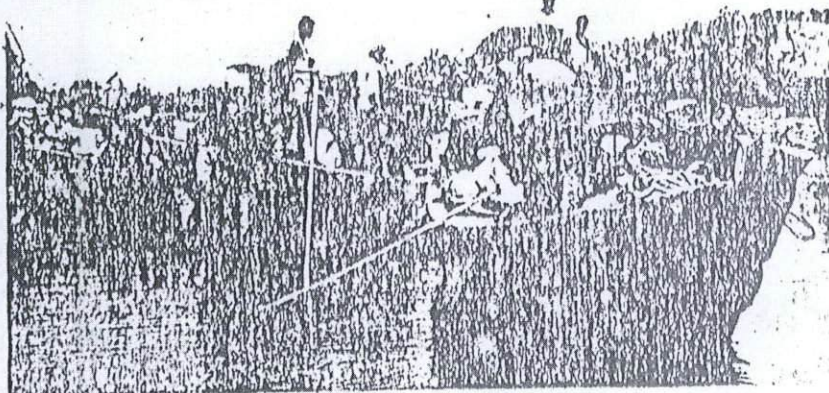
**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.**

You can show your solidarity with people in need by supporting the voluntary refugee organisations in your country.

They don't ask your help to support refugees forever and ever.

They need your help to make refugees self-supporting.

Living a useful, peaceful and happy life somewhere in the world. Just as you do.



A relatively successful repatriation.

## Back to Burma

From a distance the tiny fishing boat is a wondrous sight. As the sun beats down it lurches its laggardly way down the murky tributary, its decks seemingly sprouting large black mushrooms.

When it nudges into a makeshift jetty nearly a hundred people — almost all carrying umbrellas — step ashore.

Another cargo of Burmese Muslim refugees has returned home.

After living in crowded camps for a year, nearly 200,000 Burmese Muslims have returned from Bangladesh to their abandoned villages in western Burma. While the world has been concentrating its attention on the plight of the Indochinese boat people, this relatively successful repatriation programme has been virtually completed without any publicity.

This human tragedy began early last year, when tens of thousands of Muslim peasants streamed across the Naaf River into Eastern Bangladesh.

It was a pitiful sight, with whole families arriving in this poverty-stricken country carrying all of their possessions — a few pots, some clothing and small amounts of rice. A mild state of panic gripped the Bangladesh Government, which had enough trouble providing food and shelter for their own people.

Within weeks, the Bangladesh Government appealed for international assistance, and before the last of the refugees had arrived, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva created a US\$16 m emergency aid programme.

Burma itself has not had an easy time since gaining independence from Britain after the Second World War. At any one time, nearly a quarter of its 31 million population is in open rebellion against the central government.

**Autonomy** Widely diversified ethnic groups control the northern half of the country. With the help of gem smuggling and opium production, the Shans, Karens and other colourful hill tribes have waged

a ceaseless battle for autonomy from the Buddhist majority which run the Burmese Government.

The case of the Burmese Muslims — two million of whom live in the west of the country — is symptomatic of this factionalism.

Previously neglected by the Government, they were subjected to a "spot" census last May to establish whether or not they had correct residence papers. This triggered an exodus into Bangladesh, with one in ten of the Muslims fleeing.

Whatever started the movement, it quickly spread throughout the community. Whole villages of the fleeing refugees were burnt to the ground, with the Muslims blaming the Burmese Government, while they in turn accused the villagers themselves for the destruction.

Some of the more affluent refugees managed to take their cattle and other domestic animals with them on the 50 mile trek into Bangladesh to the Cox's bazaar region — a narrow strip of land bridging the Indian Ocean and Naaf River.

It is hard to think of a more inappropriate country in the world to accommodate nearly a quarter of a million hungry refugees. Despite the fact that Bangladesh is a Muslim country, it couldn't contemplate allowing the refugees to settle permanently there.

**Agreement:** Once the UNHCR had organised its emergency programme, relief workers arrived and quickly set up 13 refugee camps along with medical clinics and wells for fresh water supplies. By July 1978 Bangladesh and Burma had reached an agreement to repatriate the refugees back to western Burma, but it was several more months before the programme got underway.

Despite the presence of aid officials and the supplies of food and medicine from outside, there was a crisis in the camps. The refugees were showing a reluctance to accept repatriation, apprehensive about

how they would be received back in their villages. People manning the daily food distribution system noticed that women and children were simply not turning up at mealtimes. An atmosphere of lethargy descended on the already demoralised refugees. Malnutrition spread and with it, deadly epidemics of measles, gastroenteritis and even typhoid. By the end of last year, upwards of 10,000 of the refugees had died.

By October 1978, the first refugees made the journey back to Burma and once the other refugees heard on the grapevine that they had not encountered any major problems, the repatriation speeded up to the rate of 25,000 each month. At the same time, conditions inside the camps visibly improved. Emergency feeding centres and special treatment clinics were established and the death rate declined as rapidly as it had risen. Nearly 40 per cent of the camp population were placed on special rations and extra nurses were provided by the Bangladesh Red Cross Society.

**Full Citizenship:** In order to soothe the fears of the returnees, the Burmese Government promised to grant them full citizenship.

The vast majority of the refugees were poor peasants or artisans and in their absence from western Burma, rice production slumped by a half. Because of this dangerous situation, it was vital to get the bulk of the refugees back before the onset of this year's monsoon, and yet another international appeal was launched to reintegrate the refugees into their Muslim community.

More than seven million dollars was raised to bolster up the agriculture of western Burma and to rebuild the villages that had been destroyed in the refugees' absence.

Hand-driven power-tillers were introduced into the region for the first time and new schools were built. While the children were marooned in the camps, the only education they had received was readings from the Koran, the Muslim holy book.

The Bangladesh Commissioner for Repatriation, Sayed Ahmed, said that "It is only natural that the best solution for them is to send them back to their own country. We never forced them — we tried to convince them and ultimately we succeeded."

Treatment of refugee problems is always a thorny question. In the case of the Burmese Muslims, international resettlement was hardly a viable alternative. Most of them had never travelled more than a few miles from their place of birth, and, with the odd exception, were peasant farmers with little chance of surviving in any other environment. On top of this, when your country of asylum is one of the world's poorest nations, there do not seem many options to repatriation.



# Nurul Islam in Rangoon to talk refugees issue

RANGOON, May 7.—Bangladesh Presidential envoy Nurul Islam has arrived here to discuss the final phase of repatriation of refugees who fled from Burma into Bangladesh last year, Burmese officials said today, reports Reuter.

More than 134,000 refugees have already been repatriated under a bilateral agreement reached between the two countries in August last year.

The official sources said that Mr. Islam, who arrived here yesterday, would continue his discussion with Burmese officials until Wednesday.

The talks would also cover arrangements for demarcation of boundaries to prevent illegal crossings between the two countries, they added.

goon-ordered census and fears of a military reign of terror, opened a temporary rift in Burma-Bangladesh relations and created a new refugee headache for a region that could hardly afford it.

More than 7,600 people died — many in a measles epidemic — before a return movement began under a voluntary repatriation agreement worked out between the two nations. But out of the tragedy has come a

and build rural health stations and schools in the remote mountain region.

Most diplomats now dismiss earlier allegations that the Rohingya flight was sparked by government religious discrimination and repression. The census created a feeling of unease and when some of the more fanatical leaders began spreading atrocity stories it sparked off a stampede, says one Rangoon-based observer. "There was no way anyone could stop it," Burma

## Refugees

# Return of the Rohingya

Between April and June last year, 200,000 panic-stricken Rohingya Muslims poured out of Burma into the Chittagong hill country of neighbouring Bangladesh's east coast city of Chittagong (THE REGION, May 19, '78). The exodus, spurred by a Ran-

Showing citizenship document: Confidence



Rohingya camp in eastern Bangladesh: "Things might be changing"

flicker of hope for the Rohingya, whose traditional homes nestle in the fertile valleys of Arakan State in Burma's mountainous western border. "Largely through government neglect, the Arakan was more or less the forgotten corner of Burma," one Rangoon resident told Correspondent Victoria Dutler. "Now, as a result of the exodus, things might be changing."

Indeed they might. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, which is supervising the repatriation, has proposed a US\$7m. resettlement programme for returnees. Reports one refugee official: "The appeal has been launched and we're off to a good start; we have \$2.5m. already." With Rangoon's help, the U.N. is providing power tillers and hand tools for the Muslim farmers and setting up a pioneering cattle-breeding centre in western Burma.

The first rice crop, however, will not be ready till November. To tide over the Rohingyas, there are such "food-for-work projects" as road-building and the upgrading of irrigation networks. U.N. officials are planning to enlarge existing hospitals

and Bangladesh quickly resolved the issue, but it took a lot longer to convince the refugees. Huddled in a string of 13 overcrowded camps that provided little protection against stinging monsoon downpours and the ever-present threat of runaway disease, they suffered for more than six months before agreeing to return.

UNHCR officials say the Burmese played their part by establishing camps and transit centres to allow the Rohingya to break journey on their way back, a trek which often took a week or more. The first arrivals found their abandoned land intact. As the message got back to the Chittagong camps, the influx gathered momentum. More than 80,000 Rohingyas have now returned, arriving at a rate of nearly 6,000 a week. Officials estimate that 135,000-195,000 will eventually answer the call for repatriation, noting that there is already a long waiting list for those anxious to join the resettlement programme. "The refugees apparently believe the government is sincere," observes one diplomat. "A climate of confidence has been established and this in itself is quite an achievement for Rangoon."

# ARAKANESSE MUSLIMS OF BURMA

By Muzzammil Haq

It is more than a year now that the Burmese regime brought into full swing its operation 'Dragon King' and within a span of three months expelled between 250,000 - 300,000 'Burmese' Muslims into the neighbouring Bangladesh. The Burmese authorities said those being expelled were not Burmese nationals, they were illegal immigrants. But very soon it was clear that the exercise was only a premeditated and malicious plan to drive away the Rohingyas of Arakan from their land, just the way the Jews did to the Arabs in Palestine.

The Muslims of Arakan who have suffered the worst persecution have lived there for more than 1,206 years. The majority population of Arakan, Rohingyas, are the descendants of the Muslim Arabs, Moors, Persians, Moghuls, and Bengalis. The Arab traders themselves arrived and introduced Islam in Arakan in the 7th Century C.E. The ethnic origin of Rohingyas is traced as far back as the later part of 7th Century C.E. So, Rohingyas entered Burma long, long before many of the other minority indigenous races.

Even the term Rohingya is derived from Arabic. King Mahayan Chandra ruled over Arakan region from 788 C.E. to 810 C.E. It was in this period that Arab Muslim traders used to cross the Bay of Bengal by trade ships. Once, a ship sank and the ill-fated traders begged for help by crying Raham Raham (mercy, mercy). Inhabitants of the Ramri Island helped them out of their trouble. Since both the parties were ignorant of each other's language, the victims were called by what they uttered, i.e. Raham. Gradually it changed from Raham to Rhohang and finally they were named Rohingyas. And hence the Muslim population of Arakan island is called Rohingyas.

Throughout the history, Arakan was an independent state. Different Muslim kings ruled over this island. Before 1084 C.E. many Muslim rul-

ers governed Arakan, particularly Mohommad Hanifa, Isa Tho and Amir Hamza have been a few famous rulers to name. Ghouri dynasty also ruled it in 15th and 16th century. Sultan Rehman Khan, in his capacity as Governor, ruled over South Burma from 1078 to 1084 C.E. till the reign of the king. Many Muslim kings ruled the Muslim state of Arakan from 1404 to 1622 C.E. To name a few; Sulaiman Shah, Zaik Shah, Ali Khan, Salim Shah, Kalimah Shah, Hussain Shah, Adil Shah, Sikandar Shah and Shah Shuja. This is enough to prove baseless the European historians claim that Burma had always been ruled by Buddhist kings. A number of other Muslim kings ruled over Burma for about 48 years from 1737 to 1785.

During Muslim rule in Arakan La-Ilaha-Ilallah used to be inscribed on the coins of Arakan. There used to be a Qazi (Judge) appointed by the government of Arakan during those days. Daulat Qazi, Mardan Moghur, Alawal, Abdul Karim Khandkar had been the most popular Qazis of this state. Persian was the official language here during those days. Minister of War, Sandi Khan had constructed a mosque at Marchang in 1433 A.D. about one hundred years before the construction of Shahjahan Masjid of Delhi. The mosque popularly known as "Masjid Kwalung" is still there. The name Arakan itself has been derived from Arabic. Arakan is a plural of Ruka (meaning-pillar).

British disliked Muslim superiority. They presumed that these Muslim rulers could pose a big challenge to their rule. Hence the British began devising ways and means to weaken them. Muslims were terminated from their services, their business ruined and their properties illegally confiscated. Buddhists were given enough opportunities and preference in government jobs.

In 1942, when the British Government evacuated Burma and the Japanese did not yet occupy, the Magh Buddhists equipped with

fire-arms obtained from the British, plundered the Muslim villages and massacred nearly 100,000 Muslims in Arakan. Thousands of men, women, and children were burnt alive by locking them up in bamboo houses and depopulated more than 500,000 Muslims from hundreds of villages. "This was the beginning of the present-day on-going genocide against the Muslims in Arakan. This blatant acts in human atrocities by the unscrupulous and deceitful nationalist Buddhists of Burma" constrained our forerunners to first organise an emancipation movement in 1947-48. "From 1944 to 1945, the Muslims of Burma launched various movements to compel the British to agree to accord the Arakan region the status of an independent state, "which could not make any appreciable headway due to cunning, oppressive, and repressive measures even when Burma was given independence by the British colonial rulers on January 4, 1948." So, Arakan was made part of Burma by the British colonialists.

Not being culturally and ethnically Burmese, the Rohingyas have never stopped from asserting their aspirations for autonomy, but having been unable to attract either the sympathy of the Muslim world or the political interest of any great power, the successive Burmese authorities have invariably been able to crush and suppress them. Evidently, the 'Operation Dragon King' of January 1978 is believed to have been conceived as far back as 1955, when the people (excluding those below 12 years of age) of Arakan state of Burma were issued the National Registration Card with the warning that only the holders of this card will be considered as bonafide citizens of Burma. After announcing the 'Dragon King Operation' in January 1978 the Government of Burma began putting in concentration camps those who did not possess the National Registration Card issued in 1955. Even a layman can

understand that after 1955, there must have been many more who would have crossed the age of 12 years, and therefore, eligible to be issued the National Registration Card. But when it was done only in 1955, and never after that, how could it be possible for them to have in their possession this so-called certificate of nationality.

As a result of Operation Naga Min or 'Dragon King,' launched by Military-Socialist Ne Win regime in January, 1978, 300,000 refugees crossed the 171 miles long frontier to seek succour and shelter in Bangladesh. They fled out of Burma in boats or on foot by the thousands shouldering what's left of their belongings in twin baskets at the ends of bamboo poles. Denis Gray reported that "Hamed Husein, a 64-year old farmer with a grey beard and dirt encrusted feet, said he had walked eight days with his family of 13. Stopping by the edge of the road, the old man rummaged through his few remaining possessions eager to produce faded but carefully preserved identity cards to prove they were legal Burmese residents. Husein said that when 300 to 400 Burmese soldiers came to his village of Shikhali recently they ignored the Cards issued on a 1952 Ministry of Home Affairs form. Instead, he claims, they systematically raped a group of young Muslim women and shot 15 or 16 men in a village courtyard."

The Sunday Times (May 14, 1978) has described the holocaust as one of the "greatest un-reported tragedies". The Muslim World League in March, 1978 had in a telegram to Mr. Waldheim, spoke about "Genocidal extermination of Muslim citizens of Burma and the continuous destruction of their property." But the United Nations Secretary General failed to take notice of the problem.

Rangoon has been disallowing civil rights to its minorities since long ago. That Muslims have been denied the Holy pilgrimage. It is only one example of the repression measures. Denis Gray reported: "At Leda refugee camp, a group of Muslim religious leaders said the army and local tough guys in Arakan

had defiled Mosques, rolled cigarettes from pages of the Koran, the holy book of Islam, and prohibited all from going on pilgrimage to Mecca." On the slightest provocation, they have been publicly humiliated, imprisoned and their properties confiscated. The armed personnel of Burma not only evicted Burmese citizens from their hearths and homes, but also deprived them of their valuables, money, ration-cards and nationality certificates -- at gun-point -- to put before the world later on that the "refugees in Bangladesh were not Burmese."

At Kutupalong No. 1, refugee camp show that so far there have been 146 births and 365 deaths, At Nilla Camp, 785 have died out of 22,000; at Leads, 748 out of 20,000. Asia Week reported: more than 7,600 people died -- many in a measles epidemic.

It is perhaps the magnitude of the problem that has compelled some Bangladeshi officials to say: "If the Burmese won't take these people back, the best way for us to cope with the problem will be to arm the refugees and help them to form a liberation front." The same thing happened to Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, the former President of Pakistan who gave warning -- "I hope you don't want our forces to cross the border". Enormity of the situation forced the Red Cross and some international organisations to rush to the rescue of the victims. But a very questionable role was played by the Christian organisations, who tried to "trade on misery and indoctrinate uprooted Muslims on Christian lines." Commendable role was played by the Rabita-al-Alam al-Islami.

The pressure exerted by the Asian countries, the Islamic Conference, the Islamic bloc and some adverse international publicity forced the Burmese regime to sign in Dacca on July 9, 1978, an agreement with Bangladesh to repatriate all Burmese nationals and residents 'now sheltered in Bangladesh'. According to the Agreement, Burma will, as a first step, accept those who hold Burmese national registration certificates and foreign registration certificates together with members of their families. As a second and third

step, those who can produce document legally issued by Burma or other supporting evidence will be accepted.

Doubts arose whether the Burmese really intended to take back most of the Rohingya refugees or even to properly rehabilitate the few thousands they may after all be able to persuade to return. The apprehensions were proved true when some returnees slipped back into Bangladesh and exposed cases of atrocity. Daily Ittefaq reported that returnee Rohingya victims are starving. Many have died of starvation. Food-stuff are not available too. As a result many Rohingya returnees are being subjected to man-made catastrophe and took the road back to Bangladesh. On crossing the Bangladesh border, they were forced to sign a paper saying that: (i) they had gone to Bangladesh on their own free will and had not been forced out by the Burmese government (ii) they had now left Bangladesh willingly and no one had forced them to do so, and (iii) they understand that they may be liable to such punishment as may be imposed by the Burmese immigration authorities for having crossed the border 'illegally.'

Maulana Noorul Islam, Vice-President of the Rohingya Jami'at-e-Ulama who went to Arakan on January 25, 1979 and got back about the middle of April, 1979 has alleged that a virtual reign of terror has been let loose in Arakan by the Burmese military and police authorities. The latest account to come out of this curtain of silence is from Rohingya Patriotic Front. It is reported that no returnee victims (has yet) got back his land, house and other properties. They have been forced to resettle in the far jungle which is not suitable for human dwellings. Their lands have been distributed to Magh Buddhists. In the Rohingya Community areas, much of the agricultural lands in every village, tracts are being transformed into government controlled co-operative farms; consequently many victims are becoming landless and jobless. They left behind cattles, houses and many movable properties of the Rohingya victims are now in the possession of

## ROHINGYA MUSLIM CALL

the non-Muslims. No decree or order is issued by the government to release those illegal possession. No former government servants among the Rohingya refugee Muslims have been reinstated. Burmese government still regards the Rohingyas as aliens. Their movement is still under restriction. Notable persons and religious figures from among the Rohingya returnee victims are being arrested on wanton and meaningless allegation.

It is also reported "those mosques, madrassahs and the Darul Ulooms which were destroyed, burnt and demolished have not been rebuilt and restored. Rather the Burmese army personnel are desecrating the existing mosques and madrassahs and Darul Ulooms encamping in them, Friday prayer is banned for the Rohingya students and teachers in the schools of the state."

As regards the rations, house building materials, clothes and all kinds of relief goods so far provided by UNHCR agencies for the returnee victims, it is reported that the Burmese authorities are cunningly depriving the Rohingyas of their sanctioned goods. A great number of returned refugees are dying out of hunger and malnutrition in the camps. Rations are exploited by the Burmese authorities. All kinds of relief milk are selling in the black markets. These allegations are also substantiated by other independent sources and have not been refuted by either the Burmese government or the UNHCR.

"The main reason why the Burmese regime has been able to be so brutal and callous, is the complete insensibility of the world community as such and the Muslim world in particular to the fate of the Rohingyas." The complacency on the part of Muslim community will not do. The whole Ummah will have to share the woes and agonies of these destitutes who were driven out of their own land, have to leave their hearths and homes and were mercilessly oppressed and have been beaten to death only because they were the followers of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Islam was dearer to them than their own souls.

The Rohingya Patriotic Front through Shabir Hussain, Secretary of Foreign Affairs acting on behalf of Mohammad Jafer Habib, President of the Front informed IMMA that it has filed a petition with the new Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Habib Chatti, calling for action and implementation of standing resolutions of Muslim world organizations concerning the persecution of the Rohingya Muslims of Burma.

The Front stated that the following were the important resolutions:

1- The World Muslim Congress have urged in the London Seminar of July 24-28, 1978 sponsored by the OIC to pressure the Burmese government to desist from pursuing its genocidal campaign against the Rohingya Muslims. The Seminar had adopted this move and recommended to Muslim governments to undertake positive action to protect the rights of the Rohingya Muslims.

2- The Muslim World League suggested in the 10th Islamic Conference held at Fes, Morocco on May 8-12, 1979 to call on Muslim governments to give financial assistance to the Rohingya Muslims who are mostly refugees.

3- The Islamic Secretariat have issued statements to the effect that the Muslim member states of the OIC should make representations to the Burmese governments to repatriate the Rohingya Muslims and recognize the citizenship rights of these people. Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia responded to the call together with other Muslim governments and made the Burmese government sign the Dacca Accord.

The Front said, "that we feel that the resolutions of the Islamic bodies are without effective sanctions. This is the reason why the Ne Win government regards these resolutions as empty threats. Without effective pressures from the Muslim governments nothing will be achieved. Effective ways and means should be devised for a permanent and lasting solution". The Front further declared that as the peaceful means fail the Muslim World must support materially and morally the 'JIHAD'

and act decisively to save over a million people in Arakan. It should be done before Ne Win succeeds in completely liquidating the Muslim minority which it is doing on a planned and systematic way.

The Rohingya Patriotic Front was formally organized in 1963. The main objective of the Front is to establish the Rohingya Autonomous State within the Burmese Federation in order to insure the enforcement of an Islamic system among the Muslims and invite the non-Muslims to Islam in a free and effective way.

## BURMA

Between April and June last year, 200,000 panic-stricken Rohingya Muslims poured out of Burma into the Chittagong hill country of neighbouring Bangladesh's east coast city of Chittagong. The exodus, spurred by a Rangoon-ordered census and fears of a military reign of terror, opened a temporary rift in Burma-Bangladesh relations and created a new refugee problem for a region that could hardly afford it. More than 7,600 people died — many in a measles epidemic — before a return movement began under a voluntary repatriation agreement worked out between the two nations. The Chittagong Divisional Commissioner who visited a number of refugee camps on March 17 last told that there has been a continuous flow of refugees to their homeland and it would take few months more to send back the remaining refugees numbering over a lakh to Burma. The refugees, he added, are eager to return to Burma at the shortest possible time for resettlement in their homeland. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, which is supervising the repatriation, has proposed a US\$ 7 million resettlement programme for returnees. Reports one refugee official: "the appeal has been launched and we are off to a good start; we have \$ 2.5m. already". About one lakh or 100,000 Burmese Muslim refugees have so far returned to their homeland from a string of

to/48

### Gaye denounces atrocities

In a statement issued on May 16, in connection with the Burmese refugees, the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference said, he was "deeply worried and anguished at the deplorable news about the destiny of the Muslim Community in Burma." Mr. Gaye, the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference said that ever since the tragedy of the Burmese Muslims and the influx of refugees to the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh continued, due to acts of aggression and sequestration of Muslim properties by the authorities in Burma, tens of thousands of women, aged and disabled were leading miserable lives in the barracks of Bangladesh and neighbouring countries of Bangladesh where they had been suffering from hunger and epidemics. The Secretary General said that the actions committed by the Government of Burma against its Muslim nationals clearly showed the fanatic objectives which negate the basic human rights and as such did not become a responsible authority which respects the rights of one of its communities." While denouncing these acts against Muslim communities in Burma, the Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference draw world attention to the tragic situation of that community and calls on its members to bring the Burmese authorities to desist from its inhuman policies and appeals to strongly denounced these acts and apply all means to end these and to offer all necessary assistance to their brothers."

(Organisation of the Islamic Conference, May 16, 1978.)

### Muslims in Burma

The Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs, King Abdul Aziz University Jeddah, Saudi Arabia held a Seminar on the Muslims of East Africa on May 21 and 22, 1978 at the University Campus. Eminent Scholars from Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Sudan and Egypt discussed such topics as: The Impact of Colonialism on Muslim life in East Africa, Christian Minorities and their activities, Problems of Islamic education in minority areas, General conditions of Muslim life in Tanzania and Mozambique, Status of Minority Rights in Islam and so on. Dr. Abdullah Omar Nassief, the chairman of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs and the Vice-President of King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah inaugurated the seminar and it was addressed among others by his Excellency Sheikh Al-Harakan, the Secretary General of the Rabita Al-Alam Al-Islami, Sheikh Safwat Saqqa Amini, the Assistant Secretary General of the Rabita Al-Alam Al-Islami tabled a resolution condemning the atrocities done on the Arakanese Muslims by the Burmese Government. The resolution runs as follows:

"We record with deep concern and anguish the treatment that is being meted out to the Muslims of Arakan in Burma and we appeal to the world conscience in general and Burmese Government in particular to put a stop to the Dragon Operation that they leashed out on the Rohingya Muslims of Burma".

### Broadening the Rohingya crisis

... Bangladeshi diplomats in various capitals have been busy explaining that the exodus is the result of a Burmese drive that "seems to have only one objective, namely clearing the entire Arakan region of the Muslim population" (estimated at upwards of 1 million). Said one diplomat: "This is similar to the expulsion of Indians and Pakistanis from Burma in 1963 shortly after Ne Win came to power." Dacca has expressed concern that Rangoon will not stop until all non-Buddhists in the Arakan region are driven out. Sharing that view, Pakistan last week lodged a protest with Rangoon over the exodus of Muslims. Apart from the fact that some of the Rohingya Muslims are of Pakistani and Indian extraction, Islamabad is said to feel "morally obliged" to take a stand since Bangladesh was part of Pakistan until six years ago. Ironically, the Pakistani concern was being cited by Burmese officials in support of their argument that the displaced Muslims are not Burmese nationals but unauthorised residents... Asked why they were leaving almost two years after the census began, one Burmese diplomat told Asia-week: "We have only just got around to Arakan. We would enter one village and the next village further on would get word of it and simply disappear." A Burmese military officer added: "The whole thing just snowballed." The officials claim that the villagers fled rather than face immigration checks because "they had no valid papers for their continued stay in Burma."...

(Asiaweek, 2 June '78)

## MUSLIM MINORITIES

ARAKAN

# The 'dragon' in the grass

The Burmese deputy minister for immigration and manpower, Li Ohn Kyan, said recently that the 'Operation Dragon King' still remains in force and would continue to be implemented until its objectives are fully achieved.

The words 'Operation Naga Min' or 'Operation Dragon King' came to be known early last year when the Burmese government started its campaign of expulsion against the Rohingya Muslims residing mainly in Arakan province, and pushed out over three hundred thousand of these into the neighbouring Bangladesh. Naga Min was the code name for the 'operation'.

The World Muslim Congress called it a 'genocidal extermination of Muslim citizens of Burma' and drew the attention of Muslim states and the UN secretary general. The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) also denounced 'the persecution, killing and torture of Muslims at the hands of the military rulers of Burma' and called upon all its member-states to 'condemn their inhuman acts and take measures to put an end to the sufferings of the Muslims in Arakan'. The OIC sent its assistant secretary general, Qassim al Zuhairi, to visit the refugee camps in Bangladesh along with the Libyan and Pakistani ambassadors in Dacca. While reporting on the 'atrocities' and 'violations of human rights' committed against these helpless Rohingya Muslims, al-Zuhairi said that the 'main reason behind the mass deportation of the Muslims was the Burmese government's fear of their influence in the region where they form more than 60% of the population'. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Algeria also raised their voices against the Burmese government's treatment of the Rohingya



Rohingya Muslims: Once refugees in Bangladesh, now refugees in their own homeland.

Muslims.

Apparently the Burmese rulers had not bargained for such a large scale reaction, tending to internationalise the case of the Rohingya Muslims. So they allowed themselves to be seen as capitulating a little. President Ne Win gave a public assurance that the 'operation' had not been launched 'for the purpose of persecution on racial or religious ground'. However he also warned the Muslim countries that the problem concerned 'only Burma and Bangladesh' and not 'any Muslim religious organizations'.

For reasons unknown the Bangladesh government also chose to keep the Muslim countries and Islamic organizations at a distance. One Bangladesh journalist close to the government and now a member of the cabinet had accused 'certain Muslim countries' (presumably Libya and Saudi Arabia) of pushing the Muslim minorities of South-East Asia towards 'adventurism' and thereby causing aggravation in their suffering.

Apparently the Bangladesh government was only con-

cerned with getting itself relieved of the 'refugee burden' and thus considered it expedient to overlook the basic cause of the problem as well as the question of the safety and rehabilitation of the returnees. The Burmese government, on the other hand, wanted to avoid any internationalisation of its treatment of the Rohingya Muslims and the concomitant issue of their fundamental human rights. So the two worked out an agreement about bilateral repatriation, the details of which were never made public.

The Burmese authorities code named the repatriation programme 'Operation Hintha' (mercy bird). In the absence of any guarantee against persecution the refugees were reluctant to go back. But they had no choice. In many instances the Bangladesh authorities forcibly handed over unwilling persons to the Burmese military officials entrusted with the task of receiving the refugees. In one instance the Bangladesh police even opened fire on a crowd of disapproving refugees killing a number of them.

Did 'Operation Hintha' signal any change in the Burmese military rulers policy towards their fellow Muslim citizens? Many reports received from Arakan negate any such hope.

Despite official assurances few of the repatriated refugees were reinstated in their government or semi-government jobs. Instead a number of them were served with notices terminating their jobs. Besides, the nationality registration certificates (NRC) of many Rohingya Muslims were confiscated with the result they cannot move beyond their villages and are thus deprived of chances for seeking job or business outside their normal place of domicile.

In some cases refugees were not allowed to return to their villages. In many cases they were allowed to return, but denied possession of their lands and properties. Where the landed properties were returned to their owners, they were placed at the disposal of 'newly created collectives' supervised by Buddhist Maghs. The tractors and other tools supplied by the UNHCR for the benefits of the refugees

were appropriated by these Magh-run 'collectives'. A large part of other relief goods was misappropriated either by the military or sold into black market. The relief stores at Maungdaw and Buthidaung are alleged to have been set on fire by the military to conceal their embezzlement.

The Rohingya Muslims find it very difficult to approach the UNHCR for fear of harassment and persecution by the Burmese. The few who had dared to complain were severely punished and put into prison. The Burmese keep on telling them not to look towards 'your white fathers' or 'Arab fathers'. Many of those who were imprisoned at the beginning of 'Operation Dragon King' were still in prison. In Akyab prison alone over 150 such prisoners were languishing without knowing either about their 'crime' or the 'duration of their punishment'. Moreover in order to deprive the Rohingyas of any leadership, the prominent people among them were, on return, placed under detention on charges like 'illegal travelling' and so on.

It is also understood that the Burmese government is planning to change the country's nationality law with a view to deprive the Rohingya Muslims of their basic citizenship rights. So with the 'dragon' still lurking in the grass, many of the Rohingyas have again started fleeing abroad. But this time they are not going to Bangladesh. Instead they are escaping individually to other countries of the region and to the Middle East.

However there is also a growing realization that the large majority cannot escape like this and so if the Rohingyas are to survive as a Muslim entity then they have no recourse but to fight. But given the experience of Muslims in Patani, South Philippines and their own — such glaring examples of ineptitude and lack of real solidarity in the Muslim world — the Muslims of Arakan face a long and lonely battle. They could indeed win it provided they also learned to depend on themselves and God. There are no would-be 'liberators'.

Continued from page /39

Don't you have any border problems with India?

No, we don't. The only problem has been the sharing of the Ganges waters, the so-called Farakka Barrage problem. We reached agreement on the most difficult period — the sharing of waters during the driest period, in April. We'll now work back to January. The problem arose only during the dry season. In the wet season, we could do with less water!

What about the problem of the "Biharis" in Bangladesh?

We wouldn't call them Biharis. They are people from undivided Pakistan who were in Bangladesh at the time of independence and who haven't opted for Bangladeshi citizenship. The majority of the so-called Biharis have opted to remain in the country. It's the minority that we're talking about. So far, about 100,000 have been repatriated to Pakistan, and we've reached agreement to repatriate another 25,000.

What is Bangladesh's position on the big-power conflicts — between China and the Soviet Union, for instance?

Our foreign policy is based on friendship with all countries. And so, in any conflict between two powers — big or otherwise — we won't tilt one way or another. Our foreign policy is underwritten by Bangladeshi nationalism. In the long run, it is aimed at helping the development of our country. We're not anti anything. That's our position.

(Continued from /45)

13 overcrowded camps of Teknat and Ukhia areas that provided little protection against stinging monsoon downpours and the ever-present threat of runaway disease, they suffered for more than six months before agreeing to return. The League of Red Cross Societies said on January 5, 1979 that 2,500 Burmese were returning to their homeland from Bangladesh every three days.

## ARAKAN (BURMA)

Communist claims denied

Mohamad Iqbal, spokesman of the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF), the only liberation movement of the Arakanese Muslims, denied the claim of the Burmese Communist Party report (Impact International, London, 22 Feb. - 13 Mars 1980) that the entire people of the Arakan state support the BCP. Iqbal said, "Even the communists are not united behind the BCP (supported by Peking under the Communist leader Thakin Ba Thin Tin). They have the Arakan Communist Party (ACP) and the Magh Liberation Front (MLF). The Socialists on the other hand support the government. The Rohingya Muslims who constitute 60% of the people in the state are enemies of the communists."

"The communists are also raiding the Rohingya Muslims and are guilty of looting and extortion. They operate in some of the hills in Kaladan, Mychaung and Minbya. There are no communist groups in Buthidaung, Maungdaw, Tangbro and most of the Rohingya towns. These areas are dominated by the Muslims and they support the Rohingya Patriotic Front," Iqbal explained to the IMMA Bulletin.

The RPF pointed out that in all areas where the communists operate the Muslims have been driven out. The BCP, ACP, MLF, and the Buddhist government are all against the Muslims. The Muslims are also in danger of being slowly de-Islamized due to lack of support from the Muslim world. The RPF has not received material aid to effectively fight for their land and Islam while Communists are getting official support from communist countries like China and others. Unless the Muslims get material assistance, the dispersal of the Muslims will continue and eventually the communist claims might come true.

IMMA

## E D I T O R I A L

This issue of the Bulletin focuses on the historical links of the Arakan region with Bangladesh as well as the analysis of human rights provisions enshrined in the U.N. Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international Covenants on Human Rights.

In the first article entitled "Arakan in Historical Perspective" an attempt is made to examine how Arakan has long been politically and culturally influenced by Muslim Bengal. The Arab traders first came to Arakan during the 7th century and since then Islam started spreading in the area.

Arakan's political links with Bengal were however, established during the 15th century, when Naramekhla, the King of Arakan sought the help of the Muslim ruler of Bengal to regain his Kingdom. The significant aspect of Bengal-Arakan link has been the migration of Arakan refugees to Bengal since the 7th century.

The second article deals with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals. This article attempts to show how the law of the Caarter regime has made human rights issues ipso facto matters of international concern. In today's interdependent world transgressions of human rights by any government produces deprivatory effects upon its own people as well as on others beyond its own border.

In addition this issue contains the statement of Prof. Shamsul Huq, Adviser, incharge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a note on the "An Arms Race."





## ARAKAN IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### Introduction:

Arakan is one of the states of the Union of Burma having a 171 mile-long border with Bangladesh. It comprises a strip along the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal from the Naaf river on the border of Chittagong to Cape Negarise. It lies between the Arakan Yuma range and the Bay of Bengal. The total area of Arakan is over 18,540 square miles and its present population number almost 20,00,000!

### History:

From the 14th to the 18th century the history of Arakan was closely linked with that of Muslim Bengal. However, Islam was first introduced by the Muslim Sufis and Mystics during the period of Hindu dynasties. Between the 7th and 10th centuries, the capital of Arakan was not Wesali and Launggret along the river Lemro when Hinduism and Buddhism prevailed. But the Mongolians conquered Wesali in 957. Although the Mongolians were in control of Arakan and had played the role of 'King-makers' they did not aspire to establish their own Kingdom.

The Arab traders, on the other hand, came to Arakan during the 7th century and since Islam started spreading in the region. However, Islam made its first major political impact during the early 15th century through Naramekhla, King of Arakan. This monarch was dethroned in 1406. He took refuge in Bengal, accepted Islam and sought the help of the Muslim name Sulaiman by Sultan Nasiruddin Shah of Gaur (then capital of Bengal, 1342-1576), King Sulaiman was accompanied by Muslim troops from Bengal. He set up his capital at Mrohaung, where the Sandikhan mosque was erected.

From 1430 to 1640, Arakan was politically close to Bengal. Zabuk Shah (1531-53) assumed Magh title Minbin and ruled Arakan and made it a fortified state. Later Salim Shah (1593-1611) consolidated the Muslim rule assuming the title of "Padshah" (copying imperial title of Delhi). It was during 1540 that the Muslim

rule Arakan reached its zenith. Salim Shah extended the Kingdom to Moulmein in Tenassarim Division of Lower Burma. Muslim influence was also intensified when prince Sudja, Brother of Aurangzeb, fled to Arakan in 1660. Sudja was murdered by King Sandathudamma, but his followers were retained at the court as Archers of the Guard, in which role they frequently intervened as 'King-makers'. Descendants of these Mughal courtiers remain distinctive to this day. Before the 19th century, Muslim presence in Burma proper was confined to small number of Gujarati traders and certain gunners and technicians conscripted into the service of the Kings of Arakan.

In 1784, Burmese King Budawpaya (or Bodawya) captured the kingdom's power and Muslim rule gradually gave in. A reign of terror was let loose by the new king, causing the migration of thousands of Arakanese (mostly Muslims) to Chittagong. During 1784-1825 period, the Burmese Buddhists dominated the region. Under the new rulers, the Muslims were tortured persecuted. To the extent that about 200,000 people fled to Bengal during the same period. This partly explained why the Muslims sided with the British during the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-28. In 1884 the whole of Burma was annexed by the British and made an administrative part of British India. However, in 1937 the British separated Burma from India. The British rule till January 4, 1948 when by the London Agreement of October 17, 1947 power was handed over to the President of the Burmese Republic. The Arakanese achieved statehood on December 15, 1974.

#### Pattern of Migration:

The influx of Arakanī refugees into Bengal has almost been an intermittent phenomenon in history. In 1775, for a large number of Arakanese took shelter in Chittagong because of persecution, chaos, and political instability in Arakan. The total number of these refugees were about 2000. Again in 1784 a large number of Arakanī refugees started pouring into Chittagong. The reason that prompted the migration was the conquest of Arakan by the King of Burma and the attendant political persecution. Still again during 1840s public life in Arakan was disturbed by the power struggle, intrigue and civil violence that took place in the capital and this prompted

migration of the Arakanese in thousands to Chittagong.

Earlier, during the uprising of 1796 and 1798 against the persecution of the Burmese soldiers large number of refugee migrated to Chittagong. The extent of the oppression becomes clear from what the refugees to say:

"We will never return to the Arakan country; if you choose to slaughter us here we are willing to die; if you drive us away, we will go dwell in the jungles of the great Mountains."<sup>3</sup>

Between 1797 and 1798 about 40,000 Arakanese took refuge in Chittagong. These posed serious political and economic problems for the East India Company. The Company's attempt to rehabilitate them in Chittagong created suspicion in the mind of the Burmese King and eventually led to the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26.

The British annexation of Arakan in 1826 led an influx of Muslim from Chittagong into coastal towns, particularly Akyab. The annexation of Lower Burma (1852) was also followed by large-scale Indian Immigration from the 1880s onward. During the British Rule, the Muslims not only sided with the British but also took advantage of higher education. Many of them attained prominence in government service, banking and business. Chittagonian Muslims supplied almost all the crews of the coastal and river-steamers. The Khojas and the Gujaratis dominated the retail trade.

The 1930s was a decade of depression and some resentment was vented upon the muslims, conspicuous in the economy. Violent riots occurred in 1930 and '38; the later lasted from July to December, and were fiercest in Rangoon and Mandalay. Some 200 Muslims were killed, while many migrated to Bengal.

In 1942, Burma was captured by the Japanese and Indians left Burma. Some return after war but the total Muslim populations in 1958 is probably slightly higher than in 1931, perhaps 600,000 (the Census of 1953-54 is quite incomplete). About half are from the South Asian countries. As of today, reportedly 500,000 Muslims have left Burma for Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Thailand and the Middle Eastern countries (excluding the refugees now in Bangladesh).

A political organization, the Burma Muslim Congress, was formed in 1945 and was affiliated to the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, the government coalition party. Two Muslims had been Cabinet Ministers during the greater period since independence: M.A. Rashid, a leading trade unionist and businessman, and U Khin Maung Lat (Abd Al-Latif), a lawyer. The Leaders of Independent Burma, notably U Nu Lay great stress upon their Buddhist heritage; Muslim are accepted as equal citizens, but number of irritants have existed. The Mujahid Revolt in northern Arakan led by Kasim, a fisherman, aimed at union of this area with Pakistan. The Mujahids terrorised the Buthidaung-Maungdaw area from 1948 to 1954, but with the imprisonment of Kasim in a Pakistani gaol their activities were greatly reduced. In September 1954, a national Political crisis was created by widespread monastic protests against Islamic teachings in state school, but in general relations are harmonious. In Arakan, where Buddhists and Muslims are intermingled, many Muslim customs are followed by the Buddhists, even beef-eating. But in Lower Burma beef-eating and animal sacrifice at the Eid are actively discouraged.

#### Culture and Language:

The Arakanese connection with Muslim Bengal found its expression in the assumption of Muslim titles by the Buddhist King and in the issue of coins on which appears those titles or Kalima in Persian script. It is clear that the Arakanese coins are modelled upon those of Bengal. Thus in Bengal the use of the Kalima begins about the time when Nareameikhla was restored by Sultan of Bengal to the Arakan throne and in both countries a clumsy Kufic was used.

Muslim in Arakan left traces in the Sandikhan Mosque at Mrohaung and in the Boddormokan at Akyab and Sandoway Shrines of Barsrl-Din Awliya, whose most famous shrine is in Chittagong.

During the Muslim rule, Persian was the official language and it continued till 1836. Muslim coinage was brought into circulation. Arabic, Persian, Rohingya, Bengali and Burmese were all practised. Burmese, like Bengali, originated from Pali and Sanskrit. Historical evidences proved that Wesali Bengali was used both by the Hindus and the Buddhists. To the extent that Bengali

Muslim poets like Daulat Kadji and Sayed Al-Awal, who wrote at the courts of King Thrithudamma and Sandathudamma, were under the patronage of officials at the court.

Rohingya, the 'lingua franca' is written in Arabic and Bengali characters. The Magh Buddhists (originally from Magadha of Bihar in India) who came to Burma during the 11th and 12th centuries developed (dialect to be precise) is not a written language.

### Conclusion:

To sum up, Arakan has long been connected with Bengal (now Bangladesh). Because of the political, cultural and commercial links between those two territories, Arakan used to be called the "extended Chittagong". The unfortunate development has, however, been the migration of the Burmese-Bengal relations. True, religious and ethnic minorities are a "source" of political and social unrest across much of the Third World; nonetheless appropriate solutions must be found to the problems of their accommodation and intergration before developing countries can attain stability, peace and prosperity. Recourse to persecution of the minorities does not provide any solution at all.

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1. The census reports are incomplete and, therefore, the correct figure cannot be obtained.
  2. For details, see M.S. Collis, History of Bengal, 11, pp.120-29; also Sir A.P. Phayre, History of Burma, pp.76-77.
  3. See, J. Stuart, "An Appeal for More Light on Arakan History", Journal of Burmese Research Society, Vol.XIII, Pt. II, (1923), p.95.

E D I T O R I A L

The fourth issue of Bulletin focusses on the forcible eviction of the Burmese nationals from the Arakan State as well as on the Bangladesh-Japan bilateral relations.

In the first article entitled, "Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh in: A Man-made Problem", an attempt is made to analyse the discriminatory policy of the Burmese Government toward the Burmese Rohingya minority who are being forcibly evicted from their homes where they have been living for centuries. Until, now, about 1,50,000 Burmese nationals have been forced to cross the Bangladesh-Burma international border and seek refuge in Bangladesh. Moreover, everyday thousands of Burmese nationals are seeking shelter in this country, many of them with bullet and bayonet injuries. This is a case of gross violation of human rights.

The situation arising out of the Burmese action poses a serious threat to the peace and security of the region. While the nature of the problem compels the Government of Bangladesh to provide temporary shelter to the Burmese refugees on humanitarian grounds, it must, however, immediately take appropriate steps for the safe return of the Burmese refugees. The Burmese authorities, on its parts, must also create a sense of security among their own nationals who are now in Bangladesh and ensure their early safe return to Burma. To be precise, the ultimate solution of the problem lies in safe return of the Burmese nationals into their own country.

The second article deals with Bangladesh's bilateral relations with Japan. An attempt is made to examine the significance of President Zia's recent visit to Japan and Japan's economic assistance to Bangladesh over the past years. During his visit President Zia emphasized the for greater economic collaboration between the two countries. The president also apprised the Japanese investors of his Government's liberal foreign policy and assured them that his government would not nationalize any project undertaken by them.

President Zia's visit to Japan will further consolidate the existing bond of Bangladesh-Japan relations. A close Bangladesh-Japan relations will not only prove mutually beneficial to both the countries but also contribute to peace and stability of Asia.



In addition, this issue contains economic news of Bangladesh, Bangladeshi's Protest Note to Burma over the eviction of Burmese nationals, and Bangladesh's position on various issues currently being discussed at the Seventh Session of the Third Law of the Sea Conference.

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### BURMESE REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH: A MAN-MADE PROBLEM

Since her independence Bangladesh is consistently pursuing a policy of maintaining friendly relations with all countries, specially with her neighbours. Maintenance of good-neighbourly relations has been one of the cardinal principles of Bangladesh foreign policy. President's visit to Burma in last July and his 3-nation tour in December demonstrate Bangladesh's keen desire to achieve the objective.

#### The Background:

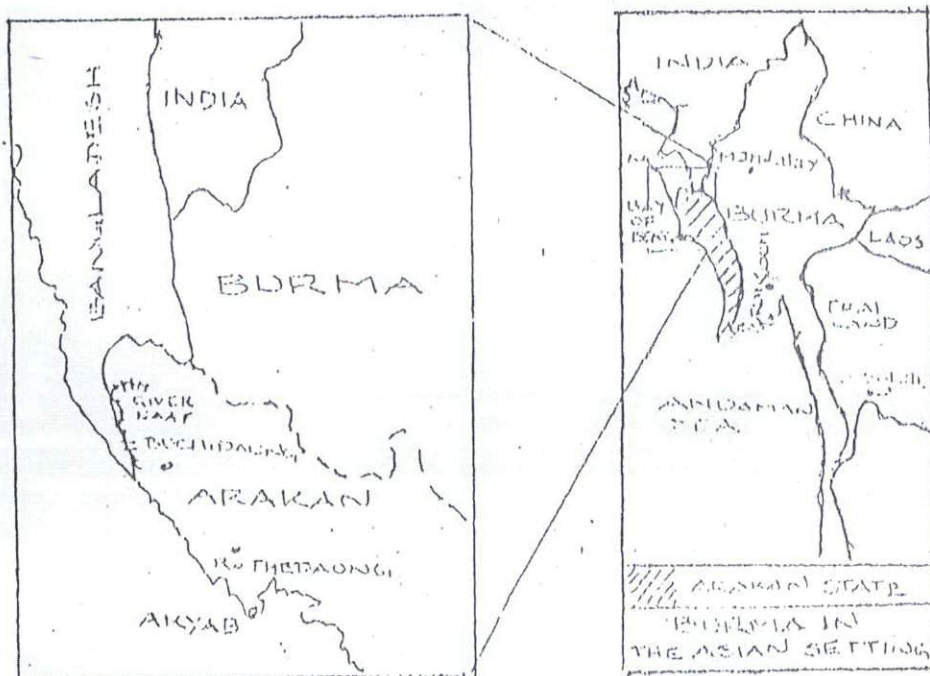
Bangladesh has a 171 mile common border with Burma. Arakan is one of the state of the Union of Burma and is the adjoining state of Bangladesh. Three different types of Muslims had settled for several generations in Arakan. They are the Rohingyas (descendants of the Arabs), Kamanchi (the followers Shah Suja) and the settlers from Chittagong origin.

Burma is a pluralist society comprising of different ethnic and linguistic groups like the Shans, Kachins, Karens, Mons etc. The majority of the people are Buddhist. The Burmese Government in recent times has pursued a policy of discrimination in dealing with a particular ethnic and religious minority residing in Arakan imposing on them strict regulations in regard to their movements, granting of citizenships and other activities. In respect of government jobs, trade and commerce their participation was very restricted. The authorities have eyed the Rohingyas with suspicion. The frustration of ethnic minority has given rise to the worsening of their relations with the authorities.

### The NRC and FRC's:

The Burmese Government had always been pursuing a policy discrimination in granting nationality certificates to the Arakanese Rohingyas. A great injustice was done to these people during the time of issuing National Registration Cards(NRC) which every Burmese national is entitled to have the system of issuing of NRC's is open to abuse considering the mountainous and inaccessible topography, patterns of population distribution and the existence of poor communications. It has become the instrument of oppression according to the Bangladesh Foreign Office spokesman. Even the Burmese press was critical about the rampant corruption in issuing the NRC's. Press reports claimed that every 3rd person was deprived of NRC's in the Arakan area.

Another important point needs to be noted regard to the NRC question since 1970 it is reported that no cards were issued in the Arakan region whereas, as per the regulation every person above the age of twelve would have to have NRC's. That means in 1970 those who were between the age of 4 and 11 years, should have been issued with NRC's by 1978 as their present age is between 12 to 19 years.





As they were not given the NRC's They ceased to be the citizens of Burma. It was also reported that in many cases even those who had received the NRC's were later replaced with the FRC's (Foreigners Registration Card) arbitrarily. Thus, the system of issuing the NRC's was directed to fit into a well-planned policy of de-nationalizing the ethnic minority of the region.

#### The Forcible Eviction:

This discriminatory policy towards the ethnic minority at times mounted to forceful eviction from their ancestral homes. As Bangladesh has a common border to take refuge in Bangladesh for safety and honour. This policy of forceful eviction was intermittent since 1973, when larger groups of Burmese nationals started arriving in Bangladesh through a number of border points to save their lives.

It was in March 1978 when even larger groups of Rohingyas Burmese began arriving and they complained about inhuman atrocities with the support of the Burmese authorities over the unarmed innocent minority. The refugees also reported that in the name of checking the NRC's the authorities there unleashed a reign of terror over these people forcing them to flee at gun points are only being checked in the minority settlement of state of Arakan.

Bangladesh government then took up the matter with their Burmese counterpart to stop the exodus of Burmese nationals. The Burmese Ambassador in Dacca was also called at the Foreign Office several times and was asked to communicate to his government to take prompt action in desisting from measures which led Burmese nationals to cross the border. Bangladesh also made strong representations through diplomatic channel but regrettably it went unheeded.

On the April 4, 1978, the President of Bangladesh sent Kazi Anwarul Haq a senior member of the Council of Advisers to Rangoon as Special Envoy. He carried a message from President Ziaur Rahman to the Burmese President U Ne Win, urging the later to arrive at peaceful solution to the problem. This was followed by a delegation from Burma headed by their Foreign Minister from the 13th April to 16th April, 1978 in Dacca. The Foreign Minister also carried a letter from his President to the Bangladesh President Ziaur Rahman. During the talks with the Burmese Foreign Minister Bangladesh asked to suspend the eviction operation in the Arakan state and to take appropriate measures so that no Burmese nationals cross the border.

During the talks Bangladesh made certain specific proposals. Among these are (i) suspension of operations, (ii) adopting of border ground rules by the two countries and (iii) repatriation of refugees to Burma. The Burmese delegation carried back home a draft of Ground Rules from Bangladesh and assured the Bangladesh side that sincere efforts would be made to seek the solution of the problem with fairness and magnanimity. As regards the proposal of sending a Bangladesh delegation to discuss follow up actions, Burmese side expressed the view that on return they would indicate the time of the arrival of the delegation.

But since then situation was overtaken by events. There has been an unprecedented exodus of refugees since 18th April. Thousands of Burmese nationals began to arrive each day, many of them with bullet and bayonet injuries mainly through Nila, Dum Dhumla, Leda Anjumanpara, Balukhali and Teknaf points.

Bangladesh Government has been compelled to provide temporary shelter to the refugees on humanitarian grounds and is pressing hard diplomatically to arrange their immediate return to Burma.

### Reactions:

The plight of the refugees caused a sharp reaction in Bangladesh. Different individuals, organizations, political parties, religious bodies condemned the 'pre-planned diabolically concerted campaign' of the Burmese authorities on the ethnic minority. A number of national leaders as well as tribal leaders of the Chittagong Hill Tracts expressed their concern over the matter. Street demonstrations, protest meetings and resistance days are being observed everyday to mark the support and solidarity with the Burmese ethnic minority and condemn the atrocities of the Burmese authorities. Different international bodies like the World Muslim Congress (an organization enjoying consultative status of the U.N.), Muslim World League also condemned Burmese action and supported Bangladesh stand taken towards the evicted Muslim refugees from Burma.

Some of these organizations appealed to the U.N. Secretary General to intervene into the matter and others draw attention of United Nations Human Rights Commission and U.N. High Commission for Refugees.

Visits:

Vice President, Advisers, Senior officials visited the Refugees Camps. Head of international organizations located in Dacca also paid visits to the affected areas. Foreign press corps had been in the area. The plights of the refugees are shocking that everyone is moved by their immense of suffering.

Bangladesh's Stand:

The large influx of Burmese nationals into Bangladesh territory has in the words of Foreign Secretary Mr. Tabarak Hussain, caused a 'situation of great strain' in the relations between the two neighbours. He also said that Bangladesh is continuing her efforts to seek a solution and she is keeping her outside friends fully informed. Bangladesh also expects that the world public opinion will persuade Burma to refrain from this inhuman course of action. At a press conference the Foreign Secretary categorically said that Bangladesh will pursue its efforts in sending the evicted Burmese nationals back to their homes. He also added that Bangladesh does not have any desire to slacken its efforts or to absorb foreign nationals.

The action of the Burmese Government in dealing with the ethnic minority are in clear violation of the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All countries of the world have different minority groups it is through adopting a policy of compassion and objectivity different ethnic, linguistic groups are integrated in the main stream of social and economic life. In no case the government concerned should pursue any discriminatory policy which might make a particular section of people feel insecure, thus hindering the process of national integration.

Bangladesh as a peace-loving country has always stressed the need for maintaining a policy of good-neighbourliness with all countries for the seek of peace and stability of the region and has been an ardent follower of this policy. It is hoped that Burma would realise the gravity of the situation and take into account Bangladesh's proposals in solving the dispute amicably, thereby removing the tension which is looming large on this region.

important

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Text of official  
protest letter  
by Bangladesh

BANGLADESH LODGES PROTEST TO BURMA

A protest note was delivered to the Burmese Government through its Ambassador in Dacca by the Government of Bangladesh. Following is the text of the Note:

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh would like to draw the attention of the government of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma to the most alarming and distressing situation that has developed on the Bangladesh-Burma border as a result of the forcible expulsion of men, women and children belonging to a particular ethnic and religious minority group from the Arakan State of Burma. As for date on 10th May, 1978, over 100,000 such Burmese nationals have sought refuge in Bangladesh. The flow of refugees, which assumed massive proportions in the third week of April, has been continuing. The Vice President of Bangladesh, Members of the President's Council of Advisers senior officials of the Government of Bangladesh as well as representatives of a number of international organizations have already paid visits to the camps where these refugees have been given temporary shelter.

The refugees, who are now in the most woeful and pitiable condition have bitterly complained to the visiting dignitaries of inhuman treatment and atrocities perpetrated on them in their native land. These complaints related to burning of houses, looting of properties, torture, forcible taking away of adult members of families, raping and molestation of women and murder. Certain sections of Burmese nationals in collusion with the Burmese officials as well as the civilian and armed forces personnel of Burma, were allegedly responsible for these criminal acts. A large proportion of the refugees consist of old men, women and children. There are many cases where men and women carry gunshot wounds on their bodies.

There is incontrovertible evidence that the refugees were compelled to leave their ancestral homes in Burma as a result of the atrocities perpetrated on them. It is most regrettable that men, women and children, in their thousands, who were born and brought up in Burma, were obliged to leave their hearts and homes under such tragic circumstances. The treatment meted out to those refugees constituted not only a grave violation of human rights enshrined in the U.N. Charter, but also posed a serious threat to the peace in the border and

stability in the region.

The Government of Bangladesh was taken completely by surprise by the unexpected turn of events and the forcible and massive expulsion of Burmese nationals. Bangladesh has always remitted to a policy of friendship and cooperation with Burma to the maintainance of a border of peace between the two countries. It might be recalled that following the goodwill visit of the President of Bangladesh to Burma in July last year the friendly relations between the two countries appeared to have been further strengthened. Motivated by a desire to maintain good neighbourly relations and also being deeply concerned at the influx of refugees into Bangladesh, the President of Bangladesh sent a senior member of his Council of Advisers to Rangoon as a Special Envoy of the 4th April, 1978 to hand over a letter to the President of Burma. In that letter the President of Bangladesh mentioned about the influx of refugees into Bangladesh from Burma and recalled the assurances given to him during the last July <sup>meeting</sup> by the president of Burma about the desirability of looking with compassion and objectivity into the human desirability of looking with compassion and objectivity into the human problem that was known to exist in the Arakan area. "In the same letter the President of Bangladesh suggested to the President of Burma" an immediate meeting between the senior civil and military officials on the two sides of the border so that suitable arrangements should be made for the return of the refugees to their homes and also for the speedy restoration of assense of security among them."

The following visit of the special Envoy from Bangladesh the Foreign Minister of Burma was received in Dacca from 13th to 16th April, 1978 and he delivered a letter from the President of Burma to the President of Bangladesh. In the Letter, the President of Burma, interalia state that "I share your hope for a border of peace, and feel deeply that we should work together as we have in the past to find amicable answers to problems between us." During the visit the Adviser for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh discussed at considerable length the situation on the Bangladesh-Burma border with the Foreign Minister of Burma. During these discussions the Bangladesh side presented certain specific proposal to the Foreign Minister of Burma Namely:

- (a) Within the frame work of agreed Border Ground Rules to establish a system of consultation, at various levels, on all matters pertaining to the border between the countries;
- (b) Temporary suspension of checking of National Registration Certificates in Arakan in view of our bilateral negotiation and pending an agreement between Bangladesh and Burma on the Border Ground rules;
- (c) Pending agreement on the Border Ground Rules a meeting to be convened immediately between the local civil military officials to ease the border situation;
- (d) To hold a meeting at the official level, as soon as possible, to consider adoption of the Border Ground Rules. On hearing from the Burmese side a delegation from Bangladesh was to visit Rangoon to finalise the matter;
- (e) A Joint Ministerial Commission to be set up to oversee and expedite action aimed at resolving all problems at the Bangladesh-Burma Border.

A draft of the Border Ground Rules was handed over to the Foreign Minister of Burma on 14th April, 1978. The Bangladesh side indicated its willingness to send an official delegation to Rangoon to discuss and finalise the matter as soon as convenient to the Government of Burma. The Foreign Minister assured the Bangladesh side that these would be made by them seek a solution of the problem with fairness and magnanimity."

While the Government of Bangladesh was awaiting a response from the Government of Burma on the proposals of Bangladesh, the situation in Bangladesh-Burma border took ~~up~~ turn for the worse after the 10th April, 1978. Contrary to all our expectations the rate of influx of refugees from Burma to Bangladesh assumed an unprecedented dimension, Since then, on a number of occasions, the Government of Bangladesh made verbal representations to the Government of Burma through the Bangladesh Ambassador in Rangoon and the Burmese Ambassador in Dacca urging upon the Burmese government the immediate need to stop the exodus and to create congenial conditions for the return of the Burmese refugees to their homes. It is a matter of great regret that

these representation were completely unheeded and forcible expulsion of the members of the ethnic minority from the Arakan state continued.

As is inevitable, this huge influx of refugees has given rise, on the one hand, to serious tension in the Bangladesh-Burma border areas and feeling of extreme concern and resentment among the people of Bangladesh on the other. The Government of Bangladesh have been obliged to provide the basic of the refugees solely on humanitration consideration. But burden of providing shelter and food to these help-less mass of refugees has placed an extremely severe economic strain on the Government of Bangladesh. The responsibility for these provisions lies entirely with the Government of Burma. The situation, as a whole, is causing the gravest concern and anxiety to the Government and the people of Bangladesh.

In the circumstances, the Government of Bangladesh is constrained to lodge a strong protest to the Government of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma against the repressive measures and also against the forcible expulsion of Burmese nationals belonging to a particular ethnic and religious minority group, thus compelling thousands of help-less man, women, children to cross the international frontier and enter into Bangladesh territory to save their lives and honour.

In view of the gravely disturbing situation on the border, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh urges the Government of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma to take urgent and appropriate measures for the immediate repatriation of these Burmese nationals to their homes and request that in the interest of good neighbourly relations and maintainance of peace in the border of the Government of Burma should desist from measures responsible for the exodus of Burmese nationals to Bangladesh.

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## RECORD OF IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

### Bangladesh

- April 13: Burmese Foreign Minister Mr. Myint Maung arrives in Dacca on a four-day official visit to Bangladesh.
- 17: Bangladesh and Burma conclude their formal talks with stress on maintaining good neighbourly relations and making the common border between the two countries a border of peace and goodwill.

- 23: Over 20,000 Burmese nationals have been forced to enter into Bangladesh during the past few days.
- 27: The influx of the Burmese Muslim refugees still continues. The figure reaches 30,000.
- 28: The Bangladesh Government expresses serious concern over the mass influx of Burmese nationals into Bangladesh. The Burmese Ambassador, Mr.Thein Win, was called in Foreign Office.
- May 1: Foreign Secretary Tabarak Hussain say that Bangladesh Government is having negotiations with the Burmese authorities to create a congenial atmosphere for the Burmese evictees to return to Burma.
- 6: Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Tabarak Hussain says in Dacca that continuous atrocities on the members of the ethnic minority community in Burma and their non-stop influx into Bangladesh for shelter and safety have developed a 'SITUATION OF GREAT STRAIN' in relation between two neighbouring countries.
- 8: Riyadh lauds Bangladesh Government's 'NOBLE ISLAMIC STAND' take towards the evicted Muslim refugees from Burma.
- 13: Bangladesh lodges protest with Burma against the forceful eviction of Burmese Nationals into Bangladesh.  
Bangladesh seeks UN assistance to cope with the problem of providing food, shelter and medical facilities to the Burmese refugees pouring into Bangladesh.
- 17: The Secretary General of the Islamic Council of Europe, asks the UN Secretary General to intervene in order to stop the 'GENOCIDE OF MUSLIM IN BURMA'.
- 23: Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Dr.Amadou Karim Gaye appeals the Muslim World to strongly denounce the atrocities of the Burmese Government on its Muslim minority.
- 28: Libya expresses deep concern about condition of the Muslim of Burma who are "facing the ugliest form of oppression, expulsion, eviction,looting, burning and plundering of their houses and property by the Burmese authority".
- 30: A four-member delegation from the General Secretariat of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference arrives in Dacca to acquaint itself with the plight of the Muslim refugees from BURMA.



VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is an issue of considerable interest and concern for the international community. Human rights provisions are included in the United Nations Charter, in clear and unequivocal terms. The signatories to the United Nations Charter have pledged themselves to observe and to respect basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, the newly developing concept of international public policy imposes an obligation on every nation to respect human rights even without any conventional obligation. Indeed, the elementary provisions of human rights and fundamental freedoms derive their source of authority both from the United Nations Charter and the modern concept of international public policy. In this sense, the law of the Charter has made issues of human rights ipso facto matters of international concern. The reason is that in an intensely interdependent world systematic transgression of human rights by any government produces deprivatory effects not only upon its own people but also upon peoples beyond the border. What follows are brief analyses of a few of the human rights issues being dealt with by United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other Declarations.

The UN Charter Provisions: There are specific references to human rights in the Preamble and six articles in the United Nations Charter:<sup>1</sup> the most important are in Articles 55 and 56. Article 55(c) calls for "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" Articles all United Nations member nations "to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization for the achievement of (these) purpose.....". In an apparent contradiction of these provisions, Article 2(paragraph-7) stipulates that nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in the matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state....." . This is most frequently used justification for rejection of international jurisdiction over human rights issues. In the opinion of

1. See UN Charter Articles - 1(1), (2), (3); 13(1) (b) 55, 56, 68, 73, and 76 for details.

most experts, however, this is negated in part by the Nuremberg principle that criminal violations of human rights are subject to the rules of international law. In addition, two advisory opinions by the Charter are legally binding, including those on human rights.

Moreover, the apartheid policy of South Africa and Rhodesia has become a matter of common concern and scrutiny and is condemned by the international community. The issue is being regularly raised in various regional and international forums and measures are being taken to desist South Africa and Rhodesia from pursuing such a discriminatory policy. Thus we can see that even "domestic policies" have international ramifications and that the international community feel obligated to challenge violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals.

With the finding of the UN Commissions on Human Rights and the Status of women, most United Nations activities the human rights field have been directed at further defining the Charter Provisions. Both Commissions report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and through ECOSOC to the General Assembly. Through the work of these and other forums the United Nations has built up an impressive body of standards, law and precedents. These fall into three main categories: conventions and covenants (treaties), non-binding declaration of principles and recommendations for national and international action.

The United Nations lists 19 major conventions on human rights and over 20 declarations. Others have been adopted by the United Nations specialized agencies. What follows is brief description of the more important of these international instruments.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. It had been drafted in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its 30 Articles cover the range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The General Assembly proclaims it a "common standard of achievement for all nations".

It has become the basis for most of the subsequent United Nations actions in this field. Its provisions have been included in the constitutions and legislation of the newly independent countries,

and it has served as the basis for several judicial decisions. Experts consider it an authoritative interpretation of the human rights provisions of the United Nations Charter as well as part of customary international law.

The relevant Articles of the Declaration Article 3, 5, 7, 9, and 15(1) (2). However, the most important Articles are 7, 9, and 15(1)(2). Article 7 reads "All are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination;" while Article 9 states that "No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile". Moreover Article 15(1)(2) reads; (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality; (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality".

The International Covenants on Human Rights: Because of the non-binding character of the Declaration, it was considered necessary to translate its provisions into treaty form and to define in greater detail. Work began in 1949, and was completed by the Human Rights Commission in 1974. Two Covenants were finally adopted in 1966; (1) The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and (2) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights includes provisions on freedom from hunger, the right to an adequate standard of living, favourable working conditions and the rights to the education. Governments ratifying the covenant are required to submit to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) periodic reports on steps that have been taken to implement its provisions.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights includes, among others, the right to life, liberty, security and privacy of person, freedom of expression and assembly and the right to equality before law. In most instances, these rights are qualified by the need to protect national security and public order, public health, morals, and the rights and freedoms of others. Certain rights, however, such as protection from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment are not subject to these exceptions.

A Human Rights Committee of 18 experts will review reports by governments of their complaints of violations by one state against another, provided both have accepted the competence of the Committees to do so. The Committee held its session in March 1977 to approve its rules of procedure.

The Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides for complaints by individuals against their governments. The Human Rights Committee is required to hear such complaints in closed session, to forward its views to the country and the individual concerned and to submit an annual summary of these activities to the General Assembly. Petitioners must have all domestic remedies for their grievances and all complaints must be signed and verifiable.

International Convention of the Elimination of Racial  
Discrimination:

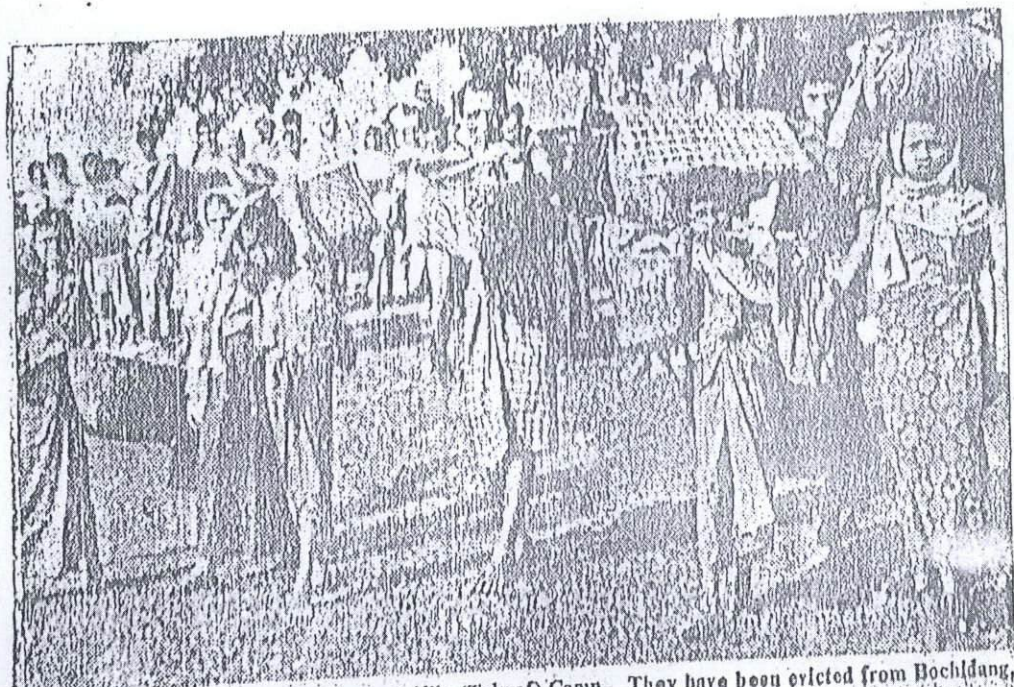
The General Assembly adopted the Convention in 1956. It has been in effect since 1969, and has been ratified by over 90 countries. The Convention obligates all states to combat all acts of racial prejudice and discrimination, "which is defined in the text as" any distinction, exclusion or reference based on race, color, descent or national or ethnic origin".

It was the first human rights treaty to contain implementation provisions. A Committee of Racial Discrimination examines periodic reports, submitted by governments on measures taken or complained with the Convention. The Committee is also authorized to hear state-to-state complaints of violations (Articles 11), and it may review complaints from individuals and groups if the state concerned has accepted the competence of the Committee to do so (Article 14).

Conclusion: In the light of the above reference to human rights issue, we can see that transgressions of basic human rights by any country arouse internal concern; and under the Charter of the UN this is an obligation of the member states to take measures against that country. The country concerned cannot claim immunity from international security on the grounds that the impugned acts are matters essentially within her domestic jurisdiction and accordingly Article 2(7) of the Charter precludes United Nations

intervention. Nor can she justify the violations of Human Rights on the plea of maintaining "internal public order." Under the Charter each state has a legal duty to treat its population humanly and to see that conditions prevailing within its own territory do not menace international peace and order. To this end, it must treat its own population in a way which will not violate the dictates of humanity and justice.

To sum up, peaceful and friendly relations among nations are based on the respect for, and fulfillment of human rights principles. The realization of these principles will help create conditions of peace and stability. It is with this end in view that the United Nations has undertaken the obligation, *inter alia*, to promote universal respect for and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without discrimination as to race, sex, language, or religion. The basic constitutive Charter Prescription is that minimum conditions of a dignified human existence must be realized and maintained by member states by joint and separate action in cooperation with the United Nations. Failure to realize this objective will necessarily result in a failure to create conditions of stability and well-being, thereby endangering peace and the very foundation of the Charter system.



Burmese ethnic minority evictees at Nila (Toknao) Camp. They have been evicted from Hochdang, Kumbra, Hal, and Dekihoula areas.

## BURMA: Rohingyas seek Saudi help

# For an armed struggle

A delegation from Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF)—the movement which fights for rights of the Muslim minority in Burma—is now in the Kingdom to seek for its cause. Leader of the delegation, Sheriff Uddin explains the situation of the Muslims in Burma and especially in Arakan where they have been a dominant force for centuries.

After last year's tragic refugee problem which caused a tremendous stir in the world, what is the situation of the Muslims in Burma now?

The situation has not improved one iota. The refugees who returned were transferred from their camps in Bangladesh straight into concentration camps in Burma. They are not allowed to visit their relatives and their relatives are not allowed to visit them. Worse still, they cannot travel between villages and towns. They have no food and no shelter. The few items such as blankets, food, Islamic books etc. they got from Bangladesh were stolen from them by the policemen and soldiers who were supposed to give them protection.

They were not even allowed to keep copies of the Koran because the government believed that its content was contrary to "their national culture." Added to this the fact that the former government employees among the people who suddenly became refugees last year were not rehabilitated. On the contrary, they were considered renegades and many among them were put behind bars.

What steps have you taken to bring your problem to world attention once again?

We reported all these matters to the Islamic Conference Organisation and the World Muslim League. We also informed the UN and the Muslim governments of our situation.

What has been done? the Islamic Conference

Organisation and the World Muslim League take any action?

Yes, our case was submitted to the recent 10th Conference of Muslim Foreign Ministers. Resolutions were passed on the issue and now we are awaiting actions to be taken.

Let me go back one step. Besides the problems you have already mentioned, what other difficulties do Muslims meet in their daily lives?

I'm glad you have asked this question. I would like to emphasise the fact that we are terrorised. Whenever you hear a knock on your door you never know who it might be. For all you know the visitor might turn out to be a soldier to shoot you even before you have time to open your mouth. That is ghastly, as I'm sure you will agree. One more thing I would like to add is this.

It is now the rainy season in Burma. As the homes of the people who fled to Bangladesh were destroyed last year and as they have no roofs over their heads in the concentration camps in which they are isolated, we would like to impress on the Islamic world the urgent need to send a fact-finding mission to the country to verify what we are saying. We would also like to ask Islamic organisations and governments not to give their aid to the Muslims in Burma through the government. Previous experience shows that aid channelled through the government never reaches where it is meant to go. It often finds its way elsewhere.

Can you give an idea of the number of refugees who have so far returned to Burma?

According to official figures they number about 200,000, but we cannot vouch for that as we have not made our own studies. The Muslim inhabitants of Arakan numbered 1.5 million. Of

these, one third have fled their homes since 1940, and in 1962 when the incumbent socialist regime came to power, forced evictions increased in frequency and intensity. Out of the remaining one million, 300,000 found life unbearable in their homeland and had to seek refuge in other countries. This calls

ted to come back in the first place?

In your last remark you indicated that the situation of the Muslims in Burma was building up over a long time. What have you or your predecessors done to check the development of today's problems and those problems

TOWNSHIP PEOPLE'S COUNCIL,  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
HAUNGDAW

Letter No. 20/11a Wa Ka-Beman/78  
Dt. 3rd June, '78

Subject: Early dismantling of the houses of shops people who crossed over to other country.

Reference: Township People's Council's Letter No. 23/11a Wa Ka-Beman/78 (705) dated 23-9-78.

- With reference to above subject, the houses belonging of those families who fled away and absconding in the other country before and after the Naga Min operation are left behind.
  - The said left-behind empty houses will be a cause of arson and other destructive activity by undesirable elements.
  - It is, therefore, to inform you, that the left-behind houses of the absconders may be dismantled immediately soon on receipt of this letter and if no progress is made in this regard, necessary effective action would be taken.
- Inform to submit a definite list of the

Sd/-  
for Chairman  
(U Mya Aung-Executive Committee)

The Chairman,  
Shweta Village,  
Haungdaw.

Copy to Township Party Organising Committee, Haungdaw.

to mind a very interesting fact regarding the so-called returnees. When they return to Burma they are often forced to sign forms stating that they are aliens. By doing that they surrender all their birthrights for ever. This is terrible...very terrible indeed. I may ask one question: If the refugees were foreigners, why are they accep-

which were faced by the community in the past?

Since independence, Muslims in Burma have through their elected leaders been trying to get autonomy in their own areas. This was sought, as it still is by peaceful, legal and political means. Now we have reached a dead end. We ought to face the harsh reality

Sunday, October 21, 1979

Arakan Muslims' appeal

LONDON, Oct. 20: The Muslim Rohingya refugees in Burma have appealed to the Muslim countries, the world community and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to immediately save them from hunger and starvation. A comprehensive and detailed report of the Rohingya Patriotic Front, Arakan (Burma), sent to Muslim States and other world forums including UNHCR, explains in detail the "atrocities committed by the Burmese Armed Forces on them".

It also charged that the Burmese Government had created an "artificial" food shortage in the region where Rohingya refugees are to be repatriated and rehabilitated. The report claims that many people were dying daily of hunger.

The Front accuses the Burmese Government of still treating its national ethnic Muslim minority community as aliens or second class citizens. "We are very much pained to report that the horror and sufferings of Rohingya in Arakan are still on the increase. They have been continuously facing the hazards of persecution, murder, loot, rape, arson and harassment in many ways by local civil administration.

Above all, our religious beliefs and rights are violated, ignored and outraged. The desecration of mosques, Islamic centres and the Holy Quran have been committed.

The report further alleged that the repatriates from Bangladesh to Burma have to undergo detailed scrutiny at the receiving camps on the Burmese border and their valuables — money, ornaments, radio, etc. are seized and never returned.

It said: "Sufficient rations, house building materials, medicines, clothes and agricultural equipment arranged by the UNHCR for the refugees was not properly distributed and reached the hands of non-refugees in Rangoon."

It maintained that the Burmese Government was amending its citizenship Act to disqualify its minority community — Rohingya people — for citizenship.

It also claims that the Burmese authorities were misleading world opinion by the false propaganda by its mass media that the returnees were being properly looked after and given all amenities. On the contrary, the report stated, the Rohingyas were again crossing into Bangladesh to escape starvation and hunger in Burma.

The Front has appealed to the international community for prompt action and an amicable and permanent solution for the Rohingyas of Arakan. To the Muslim world it said: "If the Muslim world is knowingly closing its eyes without giving any substantial help to these uprooted Rohingya Muslim then undoubtedly they will be liquidated from their ancestral homeland within a couple of years like the Cambodian Muslims."

The report, spread over several pages, has listed names of several Muslim returnees who are in jails for the last year without trial. — PPL

that the present socialist government ruling Burma has the avowed aim of eliminating Muslims from the country. They realise that Muslims cannot compromise on their socialist principles and ideologies. I can go further and say that another motive on the part of the government is that up to 1962 Muslims controlled economic, commercial and industrial activities of the nation. But this came to an end after nationalisations in 1963.

\* So what is that you want now?

"We have been accused by the government of wanting to cede from Burma and be annexed to a neighbouring state. This is no more than a fabrication. We want to remain free within the sovereignty of the state of Burma. But our freedom can only be assured when we are given true—not phantom—autonomy. We want to control civil administration; education, religious affairs; home affairs including police, immigration and para-military organisations, and commerce in our areas. That is what we mean by autonomy and that is what we want to get. We allow the central government to control defence, foreign affairs and currency. I think this is not being unreasonable.

\* Earlier you said your peaceful activities to achieve your demands have all failed. Do you entertain no hope of success with the present government?

peace-loving community, we hate blood-letting and violence but if our rights continue to be violated we will not hesitate to wage armed struggle.

\* Would you say you have received substantial help from the Muslim world.

\* Briefly the answer is no. In fact we received nothing. One point ought to be explained though: Muslim countries and organisations did help our refugees through the government of Bangladesh. That was a very kind gesture and we are very grateful for it but we would like to get direct help in order to fight the enemy directly and that is the reason we are here now.

Symposium on the Problems and Consequences of Refugee  
Migrations in the Developing World

THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH:  
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONSEQUENCES

K. Maudood Elahi

In historical demography or branches of population studies dealing with population movements, the significance of large-scale expulsion of human population for political, religious, ethnic and related reasons has largely been ignored. Even the expulsion of a minority group, for any of the above reasons or lack of it, by the dominant group can rightly be considered as the case of political persecution. The political changes that have taken place in South Asian Subcontinent during the present century triggering off widespread population exchanges and movements are the right examples; and as a result of these changes long term consequences have ensued for both the expelling and the receiving countries (Elahi and Sultan, 1983). In fact, the South Asian region has witnessed several stages of refugee\* movements from time to time till the present decade. One of the fairly recent major refugee situations involved the Rohingya Muslims in the Arakan province in Burma who took shelter in Bangladesh.

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\* According to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article I, a refugee is defined as '... an individual who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it' (UN, 1978).



For the refugees, mainly political, freedom of movement - as it is delineated in the UN Declaration of Human Right, is fundamental. The disregard of human rights by certain governments or dominant population groups resulting in the persecution of innocent people or of those resisting oppression has underscored the importance of flight and asylum as an ultimate human right (Grahll-Madsen, 1972).

It is under this broad frame of reference, a relatively small refugee group known as the Rohingyas concerning Bangladesh and its neighbour, Burma, is discussed. The objectives of this paper are concerned with the historical perspectives and the consequences of the movements of the refugee groups.

#### Burma and the Rohingya Muslims in Arakan

A land of valleys and mountains lying on the western periphery of the Southeast Asian peninsula covering about 262,000 sq. miles and with a population of about 36 million (1982 ESCAP estimate) lies Burma - the second most important neighbour (after India) sharing a common border of 172 miles in the southeastern tip of Bangladesh (Fig. 1). In most senses, Burma should really be a part of what used to be called the 'Indo-China Complex' with which it has more affinities than with the neighbouring South Asian subcontinent. It was not so regarded by the British during their rule in India, and until 1937 Burma was a part of British India for mostly administrative conveniences. After 1937, it became a separate part of the Indian empire, and at the end of the British rule, shared in the breakaway.

Thus in 1948, Burma became an independent sovereign Asian state outside the British Commonwealth. The country came to be ruled by the Anti-Fascist People's League - an enthusiastic and heterogeneous party led by U Nu, and it had to face a pluralist society comprising of different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, like the Burmans, Shans, Kachins, Karens, Mons, Magh and others. The Buddhists comprised 80 per cent of the population. Three other religions with sizeable followers are the Christians, the Muslims and the Hindus. Immediately after the independence, tribal dissensions, particularly in the north, arose. In short, the post-independence era was a record of a horizon of rebellions launched by

communist groups and by various non-Burmese tribes including the Karens, the Shans and the Kachins. Under this situation, the army fearful of a secessionist movement in the non-Burmese regions took over power from U Nu government and installed a revolutionary administration under Ne Win in early 1962. After a brief period of isolation, this government adopted a socialist constitution in 1974.

The basis of the pluralism in the Burmese population and society owes its origin with the geography, history and culture in relation to the transitional zones of the South and Southeast Asia corresponding to the west and northwestern Burma and adjoining areas. Thus between Bangladesh and Burma, these ties relating to the Arakan region in western Burma date back to a distant past.

The abode of the Rohingyas is the Arakan region in western Burma. It is also a natural physiographic unit - the whole region being separated from the rest of Burma by the Arakan Yoma (range) running north to south. In the past, it enjoyed political independence for a long time. The Rohingyas are racially mixed Burmese and are Muslims by religion.

The pioneer Muslim settlers in the Arakan region of Burma date back to the 7th century A.D. when the Arab and the Yaneni traders used to visit the port of Akyab in Arakan by sea. These traders were also accompanied by Muslim saints and religious preachers. Many of these people, attracted by the relative ease in life and the richness of living of the local inhabitants, settled in Arakan and its adjoining coastal areas as far north as in Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) and Tippera (now in India). Gradually, a mixed Muslim society and culture developed and flourished. By the 15th century, in response to the expansion of the Mughul empire in the Indian subcontinent, some Muslims, mostly from lower Bengal, also inhabited in the Arakan region. During this period, the King of Arakan had a close diplomatic relation with Bengal. And till the mid-18th century the Arakan Muslims continued to have a close cultural affinity with the Muslims outside Arakan (Table 1).

Presently, the Arakan Muslims are also known as the Rohingyas. Some of their ancestors were Buddhists from Magadha in north and northeastern India persecuted by the Hindu revivalism in India during the rule of the Sena dynasty in 11-12 centuries (Ahmad, 1975).

The non-Muslims, mostly the Buddhists, from the same racial or ethnic stock came to be known as the 'Magh' as they came from Magadha (Table 1). Between 1434 and 1610, Arakan maintained an independent status (known as Roang or Ronang) ruled by the Muslims. In late 16th century, during the Mughal period, the Arakanese occupied Chittagong with the help of the Portuguese. The Arakanese occupation lasted till the mid-17th century when the Mughals drove them out of Chittagong region to the outlying areas in Arakan and Burma. However, Arakan continued its independent status until it was incorporated by the British in 1885 and later, despite local opposition, to be merged with Burma with its independence in 1948.

#### Major Muslim Settlements in Arakan

Major Muslim settlements in Arakan developed along the rivers of Lemro, Mingan, Kaladan, Mayu and Naaf. Hundreds of village flourished in these settlements and till the very recent decades, in the villages along the Naaf, Lemro and Mingan rivers in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rasidaung and other places, the Muslims used to form more than 50 per cent of the total population. In the past, the proportions were between 80 to 90 per cent, and populations belonging to other religious groups were too small.

#### Genesis of Religious and Political Persecution in Arakan

The Arakan Muslims have become the target of religious and political persecution in a systematic manner during the present century. Arakan is an important province under the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, but it has long been a Muslim populated area and it developed, since long, as noted earlier, a distinct culture of its own which goes back to about 1300 years. The relative isolation of the Arakan region due to the Arakan Yoma towards the east and running north to south separating the Burmese mainland inhabited mostly by the Buddhists, primarily, perpetuated and strengthened its distinctive culture and identity. From 1434, for about 280 years, Arakan flourished as an independent Muslim kingdom (often with nominal Mughal suzerainty). During the later period, mostly after 1610, the independent status became unstable due to conspiracies and disputes amongst the successors and the ministers. But despite its

isolation, various tribes and ethnic groups in the Arakan Yoma and the east were aware of the agricultural and trade potentials of the Arakan region. There are evidences that the religio-political conflicts between the Arakan Muslims and the Maghs and the Burmese - mostly from the eastern Arakan Yoma and northern Burma - started in the later parts of the 17th century. In 1785, the King of Burma invaded and occupied Arakan which led to a large scale persecution of the Arakan Muslims. This persecution, like the many others in later periods, was short lived as this region enjoyed natural protection from sudden attacks because of the Arakan Yoma and this also discouraged free and immediate movement of population from Burma in the east.

As soon as Burma was annexed by the British into the British India in 1885, signs of tribal and ethnic strife began to surface. In a background of a widespread rural rebellion which broke out in 1931, Burma alongwith Arakan was separated from India and subsequently won internal self-government in 1937. Soon after this political arrangement, interreligious and interethnic tension, particularly in Arakan began to build up and sporadic violences against the Muslims became common.

Burma was occupied by the Japanese for a brief period of the World War II. Following the war, a huge quantity of arms left by the defeated Japanese army flowed into the hands of various factions of the rebels including the Maghs and other hill tribes of Burma, many of whom cherished deep disliking of the Rohingyas. And the latter suffered at the hand of these tribes. Despite the appointment of a number of commissions and enquiry committees to look into the matter, nothing substantial materialized. In fact, in 1947 alone, four commissions were set up by the Government of Burma but all failed to reach a solution to the problems of inter-religion and ethnic relationship in Arakan. Soon after the Independence of Burma in 1948, attempts were made to label the Rohingyas as outsiders and their demand for an autonomous status within the Union of Burma, for their survival, was designated as a separatist movement. In fact, in 1970, a joint representation by the Arakanese Rohingyas and the Maghs for an autonomous status of their region was made to the Ne Win government. This status, however, was granted to the Maghs in 1974, but not to the Arakan Rohingyas. Rather, it resulted in a widespread persecution of the Arakan Muslims. The extent of this persecution throughout this period is reflected in Table 2.

Table 1.

Sequence of historical transformation and mobility of the Arakan Muslims.

<u>Sequence of events</u>	<u>Places and periods</u>	<u>Affected groups</u>	<u>Consequences/remarks</u>
Pioneer settlements of the Arabs and the Yamenis in Arakan coasts.	Arakan and Chittagong; 7th century, A.D.	Arakanese and other indigenous groups.	Increasing contact with the local and non-local population groups; spread of Islam and emergence of Muslim settlements in Arakan region.
Caste Hindu revivalism resulting in ethnic and religious persecution.	North India (Magadha) and major part of Bengal: 11-12th centuries.	Buddhists and low caste Hindus.	Religious and caste selective migration to lower Bengal towards Chittagong, Burma and even upto Southeast Asian regions; development of major Muslim and Magh settlements in Arakan.
Sporadic spontaneous population exchanges.	Bengal and Arakan: 12-15th centuries.	Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus.	Increasing trade and cultural contact with Bengal.
Formation of the Muslim Kingdom in Arakan.	Arakan and part of Chittagong: 15-mid-17th centuries.	The Rohingyas and other Muslim groups.	Muslim's political and social revival; 17 Muslim kings ruled Arakan region known as the Rohingya/Roangya Kingdom (Rosang).
Decline of the Mughal Empire resulting in crisis in succession. Some princes took shelter in Arakan (late 17th century). Invasion of Arakan by the Burmese king (1785). Fall of the Arakan Kingdom.	Arakan Kingdom: late 17-18th centuries.	Rohingya Muslims.	Brief period of allegiance crisis of the Arakanese vis-a-vis the Mughals; systematic persecution, first of its kind, of the Rohingya Muslims by the invading Burmese.

<u>Sequence of events</u>	<u>Places and periods</u>	<u>Affected groups</u>	<u>Consequences/remarks</u>
Incorporation of Arakan into the British fold.	Arakan and Burma: 18-early 20th centuries.	Roangya, Magh and other ethnic minorities; the Burmese.	Visible changes in political relation between Burma and Arakan; dissension among the tribal groups and religious minorities.
Postwar political change in Burma and incorporation of Arakan into the Union of Burma.	Arakan province: 1942-1978.	Rohingya and other Muslim groups.	Systematic persecution of Rohingya Muslims by stages; large scale out-migration - later followed by attempts of repatriation and adoption of discriminatory citizenship laws.

Table 2.

Persecution of the Rohingyas in Arakan, 1942-76.

<u>Nature of persecution</u>	<u>Approx. number</u>	<u>Areal extent/remarks</u>
Destruction of settlements	692	Rohingya settlements.
Indiscriminate use of explosives	500,000	Rohingya areas.
Massacre	100,000	In 1942 alone.
	20 to 30,000	Between 1942 and 1976.
Severe attacks/wound/torture	5,000	Rohingya areas.
Rape (reported)	1,500	Rohingya areas.
Murder	5,000	with marked mutilation.
Abduction	3,000	Rohingyas and other Muslims mostly in Arakan, Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Akyab, Rathidaung, Insein, Moulmein, Prome, Mandalay and Shan.
Destruction of mosques and religious schools	600	
Destruction of holy books and documents	200,000	
Confiscation of religious property	2,000 (acres)	

<u>Nature of persecution</u>	<u>Approx. number</u>	<u>Areal extent/remarks</u>
Removal from government jobs	10,000	
People whose whereabouts are not known	20,000	'Left the country' as version of the Burmese government.

Sources: Documents of the Rohingya Patriotic Front as quoted in: Bichitra, 1978.

The Muslims persecution in Arakan reached its climax in the month of February, 1978 and this time it was assisted by the Burmese army under the code name of 'Nagamin Operation'. The purpose of the operation was to ascertain the nationality of the Arakan Muslims as a prelude to organize census count. It has been reported that the army adopted a measure of determining nationality of the population by identifying the marks of firm smallpox vaccination on the arms. Those having this mark were regarded as outsiders. Mention may be made here that the vaccination was administered during the later years of the British rule in both Arakan and the adjoining areas of what is now Bangladesh. Subsequently, the Burmese army arrested 400 Rohingya women as suspect outsiders. The protest to this action of the army led to further arrests and oppressions of the Rohingyas, and they were warned by the army that any opposition to the forthcoming 'Dragon Operation' in March will result in the 'total annihilation' of the Rohingyas. Throughout the month of March, thousands of Rohingyas were arrested, tortured and their villages burnt down. The worst affected area was the Buthidaung subdivision, in particular, the villages of Dabinsara, Jadibarung, Kadurpara, Ganibarpara, Nakindauk, Garongehaung, Hokkapara, Manirbil and few others. As a result of this persecution during the early 1978, thousands of Rohingyas started to take shelter across the Naaf river in Bangladesh. Between April and July, 1978, more than 200,000 Rohingyas took shelter in the Teknaf, Ukhia and Cox's Bazar areas in Bangladesh (Table 3, and Fig. 1).

Table 3.

Rohingya refugees from Burma in the camps of Bangladesh, 1978.

<u>Camps</u>	<u>Number registered</u>
1. Dechuapalong I	23,150
2. Dechuapalong II	26,797
3. Dhoapalong	13,774
4. Kutupalong I	10,018
5. Kutupalong II	15,220
6. Anjumanpara	13,816
7. Whykong	14,522
8. Nhilla	26,193
9. Ledha	20,395
10. Ghundum	7,317
11. Naikongchari	21,674
12. Kuniapalong	8,459
13. Marichapalong	21,200
<u>Total:</u>	222,535

Source: Bangladesh Red Cross Society, 1978 as quoted in : Kamaluddin, 1983.

#### Present Status of the Rohingya Refugees

The exodus of the Rohingyas in 1978 is believed to have been precipitated by a census taking in the Arakan region, who legally are citizens of Burma but who have been apprehended sometimes as illegal migrants (Rizvi, 1978). As noted earlier, from their previous experience, the Rohingyas apprehended a policy of discrimination by the Burmese government. Certain regulations restricting their movements within the country, granting of citizenship and restricting their entry into the government services and in trade and commerce had built up pressures and frustrated this religious and ethnic minority. And finally, when the Burmese army launched a nationality-oriented census, the Arakan Muslims, mostly the Rohingyas felt constrained to leave Burma and take refuge across the Naaf river in Bangladesh.



This and the subsequent influx of the refugees resulted in considerable pressure on Bangladesh economy and relations between the two neighbouring countries became strained. However, on 9 July, 1978, Bangladesh and Burma reached an agreement to repatriate those refugees who could produce evidence of their prior legal residence in Burma and to cooperate to prevent so called future illegal border crossings. As of late 1979, the outlook was for the eventual repatriation of a large proportion, but not all, of the refugees. And in fact, all but 10,000 of the refugees were repatriated to Burma as of late 1979 (UN, 1982). On the other hand, nearly US \$ 7 million UNHCR assistance was put into operation by the Burmese government in order to rehabilitate the returning refugees in the Arakan province in Burma (Fig. 1) (Azam, 1983).

#### Concluding Remarks

Although the repatriation of the Arakanese Muslims to Burma has, often, been viewed as an example of successful repatriation, the return of these refugees culminated in the drafting of a new citizenship law in Burma. The proposed law created two classes of citizens: members of indigenous Burmese ethnic groups, and 'naturalized' citizens, with the latter chiefly, Pakistani, Bengali and Chinese origins, and numbering 3.5 million of a total of about 36 million population in Burma. Conceived as a means of discouraging immigrants from other countries in the region, the law excluded naturalized citizens from joining the military and participating in elective government and party bodies, and it prevent them from leading certain economic organization (UN, 1982).

The above measures as regards the Rohingyas and other Burmese Muslims do not indicate a bright future for any of them. The measures are not only repressive but also highly discriminatory and in clear violation of the UN Declaration of Human Right. The potential and real disregard of human rights by the Burmese government against the Rohingyas and other minority groups in Arakan is bound to perpetuate persecution syndrome amongst the concerned population and in that case, they are bound to adopt the path of flight and asylum as an ultimate human right in the neighbouring countries in the years to come.

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The author: Dr. K. Maudood Elahi is Associate Professor and Chairman, Department of Geography, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is also a member of the Commission on Population Geography of the International Geographical Union (IGU).

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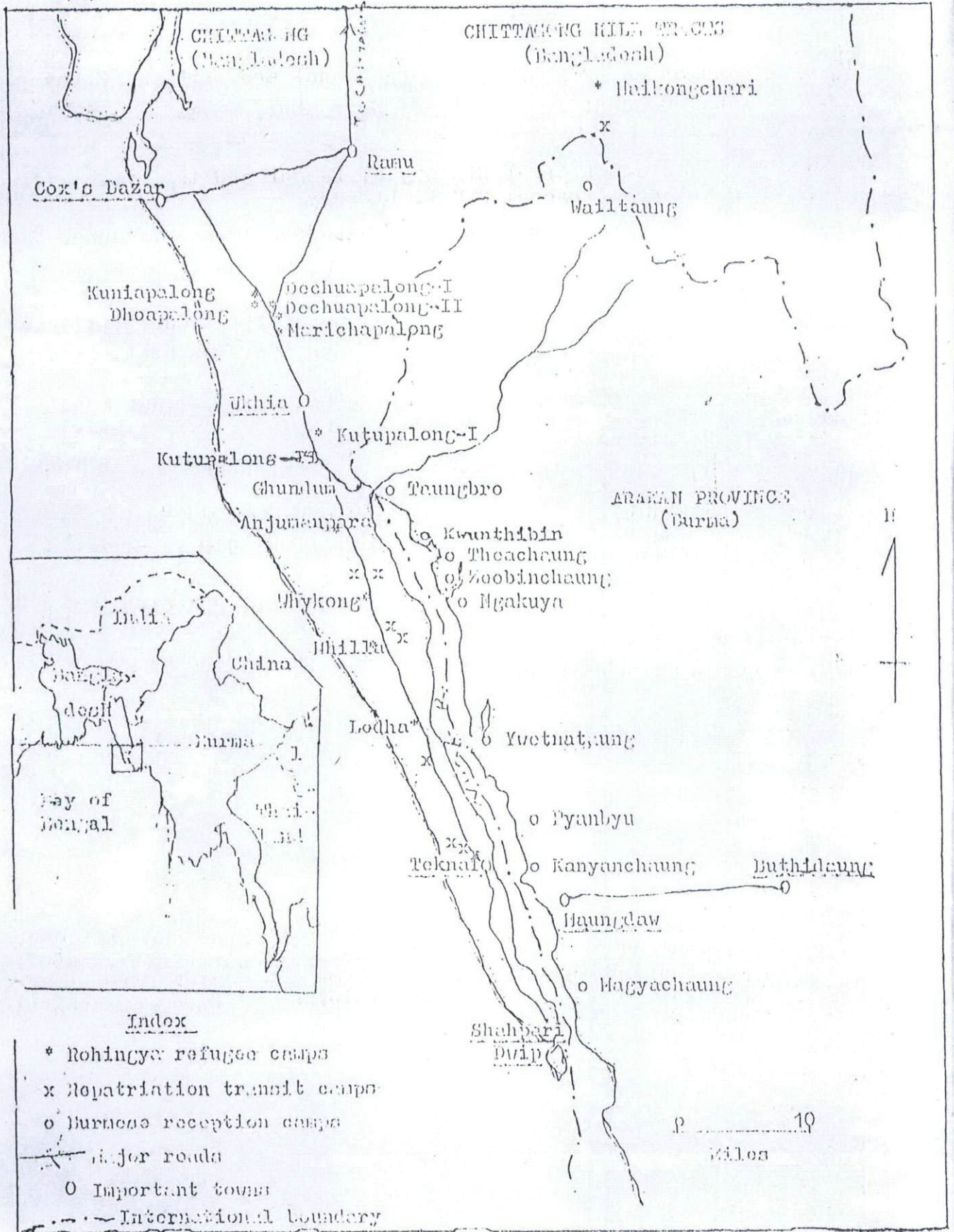


FIG. 1. Distribution of Rohingya refugee camps, repatriation camps and transit routes, 1978.

## PERSPECTIVE

**Dragon King**

Reports of a new citizen registration drive in Burma and excerpts from an earlier report underline the need to treat all religions equally:

They had been there since Islam began its long swirl through Southeast Asia, a devout and self-reliant people who called themselves the Rohingya. Their land lay in the Arakan territory of southwestern Burma, with India to the north and Bangladesh to the west. While much of Burma seethed through war, colonialism, independence and insurgency, the Rohingyas lived quietly and contentedly in their frontier fastness. But in the past month at least 110,000 of them poured across the border into Bangladesh, and the tide was still flowing this week.

The trauma and trappings of the dispossessed are easily seen in the area around Cox's Bazaar and in the towns that dot the finger of Bangladesh lying between Burma and the Bay of Bengal. Rohingyas Muslims strapple in bearing babies in slings and bedrolls under their arms. Some carry parents too ill or old to walk. Women beg strangers to listen while they tell of husbands and brothers shot dead, houses looted and burned, mothers and daughters raped and families forced to watch.

"They are coming at the rate of 2,000 to 3,000 a day," said a harried local official in the town of Nshila, 100 miles southeast of Cox's Bazaar. "The ration of milk and rice I have is hardly sufficient for 2,000 people - and already I have 20,000 in this camp."

Rangoon waited until this week before breaking what had seemed to be an embarrassed silence. The refugees, said Burmese officials, actually were Bangladeshis fleeing an "immigration check" codenamed Dragon King. The Burmese government charged that "armed bands" from Bangladesh had attacked soldiers conducting a drive against illegal immigrants. Burma's official news agency said Bangladeshi police had also fired on security outposts and army patrols. Dhaka responded by lodging a formal protest against Burmese policy on the Muslims.

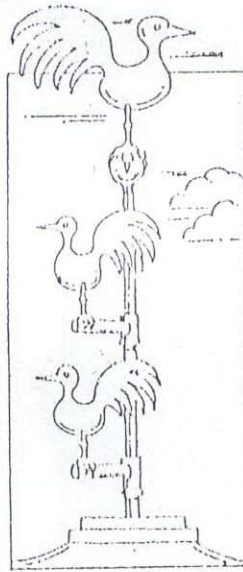
The refugees say Dragon King is an anti-Muslim drive to force them from their ancestral homes and that it was preceded by similar campaigns in 1955, 1959 and 1975. Some of the refugees have set up a "Committee in Aid of Burmese Rohingya" at Cox's Bazaar, where they issued an "appeal to the world community" last week. In recent years, they claimed, some 400,000 [Rohingya] had left Arakan to migrate to Bangladesh and other Muslim countries farther west. They said previous campaigns were minor compared with the "extermination" aims of Dragon King [and that] so far 150,000 Rohingya in the Buddhidoug area and 50,000 more in Maungdaw had been forced to flee for their lives.

Bangladeshi officials visited Rangoon several weeks ago to avert what they saw as an approaching crisis. Last month a minister-level Burmese delegation went to Dhaka. That the problem worsened after those talks is seen as proof of deep problems about which both Bangladesh and Burma have chosen to remain silent.

Bangladesh does not have the capacity to support a sudden influx of destitutes who may already number more than 200,000. The territory into which the refugees are flowing is backward by Bangladeshi standards. Trees provide the only protection from a scorching sun and there is no provision for food supplies. Many babies have been born since the influx began; most have died from starvation or heat. Trees near refugee camps are festooned with slogans such as DOWN WITH THE FASCIST REGIME IN RANGOON and NO FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MURDERERS IN BURMA.

One local functionary said: "If a peaceful solution isn't found quickly, the only possible solution will be war. If the Burmese won't take these people back, the best way for us to cope with the problem will be to arm the refugees and help them form a liberation front. Let them go back to their country and fight for their homes and their language and their dignity. I'm sure Rangoon will understand that."

Asiaweek, May 19, 1978



Asiaweek Drawing