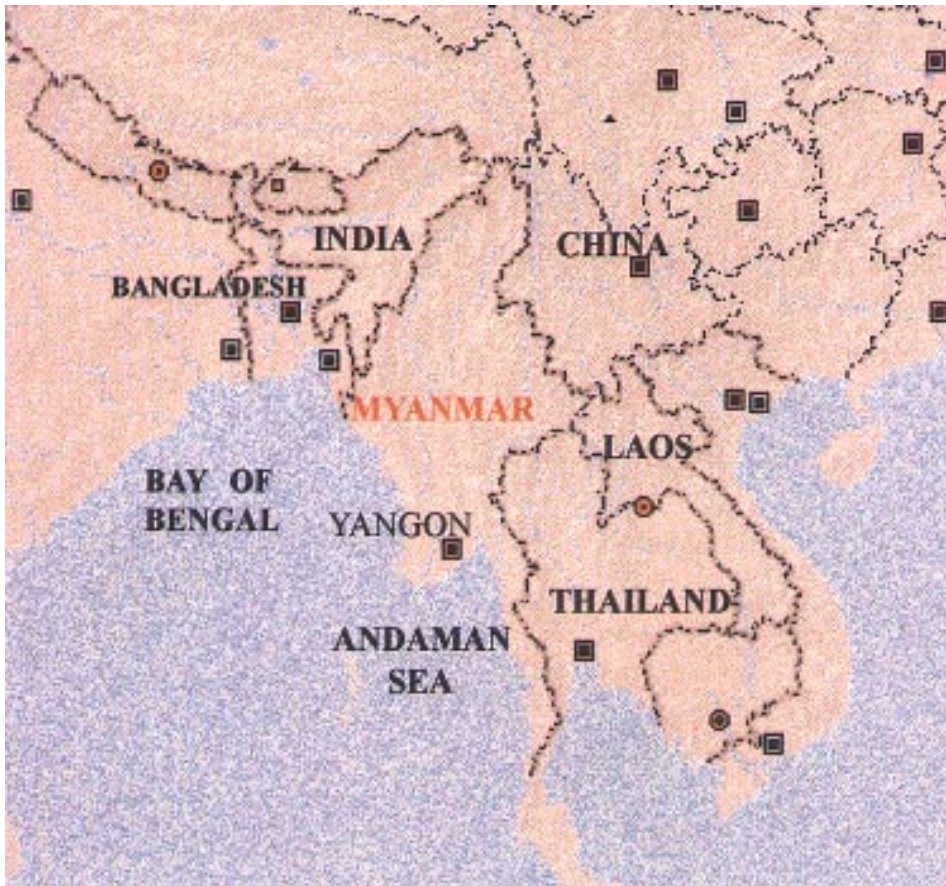


## Union of Myanmar

### The Length of Borders with Immediate Neighbouring Countries



<b>China</b>	- 2192 km (1362 miles)
<b>India</b>	- 1331 km ( 827 miles)
<b>Bangladesh</b>	- 256 km ( 157 miles)
<b>Thailand</b>	- 2096 km (1302 miles)
<b>Laos</b>	- 224 km ( 139 miles)
<b>Coast Line</b>	- 2276 km (1414 miles)

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## ***1. Geographical Location***

Myanmar is located in South East Asia bordering the People's Republic of China on the North and North East, Laos on the East, Thailand on the South East, Bangladesh on the West and India on the North West. It is also strategically located between South Asia and South East Asia. More interestingly, Myanmar is sandwiched between the two most populous nations in the World-- China and India. Bangladesh, 5 times smaller in size with a population 3 times larger than Myanmar, is another of her neighbours. The former, unlike Myanmar is not blessed with abundant natural resources, in addition to which she has the misfortune to be battered by natural disasters almost every year.

## ***2. People And Religion***

Myanmar comprises eight major national ethnic races with some 135 ethnic groups. The major national races are Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Bamar, Rakhine and Shan. The Bamar form the largest national race constituting 70% of the whole population. In the religious sector, 89.2% of the population is Buddhist, while Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Animism are also practised.

## ***3. Pre-Independence Days***

The divide-and-rule policy with which the British had ruled Myanmar for over 100 years paved the way to the outbreak of insurrections as soon as she regained independence. Moreover during the years of struggle for independence, a variety of conflicting ideologies and ideas had proliferated and infused the thought of those who had participated in the struggle and bred differences in outlook and attitudes. All this eventually caused the disintegration of the national unity and solidarity just prior to independence. Myanmar's national hero General Aung San and his ministers were assassinated in July 1947 through the complicity of the colonial conservative government. It was the most damaging act in the history of Myanmar. It left the country almost leaderless on regaining her independence from Britain in January 1948. The British also forcefully introduced the production of opium in the northern Myanmar states in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the aim of increasing the opium trade with China. Myanmar inherited these problems which have remained an entrenched and a current issue.

#### 4. *Confusion Over The Name Of The Country - Myanmar Or Burma*

Refusing to call a nation by its proper official name may seem insignificant to some but generates resentment among a very high majority of the Myanmar population. The subject is concerned with the recognition of the country by its original name. Of course, there are a few politicians in Myanmar who for certain political reasons prefer to retain the name *Burma* given by the former British Colonial Administration.

*Myanmar* and its capital *Yangon* are not new names created by the State Law and Order Restoration Council. In fact, *Myanmar* and *Yangon* are the original names that were renamed *Burma* and *Rangoon* by the British Colonial Administration. In spite of the fact that in the Myanmar language people use the names *Myanmar* and *Yangon*, unfortunately, none of the successive Myanmar Governments took the trouble of reinstating the original names. The SLORC administration did so with two main purposes: to provide a feeling of release from the British colonial past and to give a previously divided and fractious country a sense of national unity under the new banner of "*The Union of Myanmar*".

In the Union of Myanmar there are 8 major national races with some 135 ethnic groups and among the 8 major nationalities Bamar is the largest national race constituting 70% of the whole population. In this regard, when the British Colonial Administration colonized Myanmar in the late 1800's it is presumed that Britain renamed it Burma since Bamar or Burmans (the British usage) were the majority in the country which they occupied. In a cave temple built in the Bagan area is a stone tablet bearing a date equivalent to AD 1190. It is one of the first known references to 'Myanmar'. In contrast, the name 'Bamar' did not appear during this and subsequent periods. The first reference to Bamar was only found in artifacts and buildings dating from the KONBAUNG Period (18th and 19th centuries). Moreover, it is quite interesting to know that China since ancient times has referred to Myanmar as Myan-Tin in the Chinese language. It never referred to Myanmar as Burma-Tin or Bur-Tin as the British Colonial Administration had re-named it.

A few years ago in Yangon there was an interview between members of the media and some of the leaders of the ethnic races (former insurgent groups) and the question of name-change was raised by some of the media.

The ethnic leaders' response was that they now feel they are not left out but are being equally given a national identity under the name *Myanmar*. Naturally, the ethnic group still opposing the Myanmar Government will say things differently because they have aligned themselves with the political party which refuses to recognize the country by its original name.

The party (National League for Democracy) stated that the name-change is not a priority and it has to be carried out with a vote. It is quite amazing for someone to say such a thing since national unity is and always would be a top priority in any country in the world. It would be highly pertinent to ask, if the British Colonial Administration implemented the name-change with a vote. If General Aung San, Myanmar's national leader, had not been assassinated in 1947, before Myanmar regained her independence, the national leaders of the time would have definitely reinstated the original names. The new names imposed by the British are not only phonetically wrong but nationally and historically misrepresentative.

Anyhow, since the United Nations has recognized Myanmar by her original name it is the obligation of all U.N. member countries to accept it whether they approve of it or not. If the situation had been reversed, certainly, these same nations would be urging the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to impose sanctions and embargoes on countries not recognizing and implementing the U.N. resolution or mandate.

## ***5. Insurgency After Post-Independence Days***

After regaining independence from Britain in 1948 a civilian government (Parliamentary Democracy Government) ruled the country. Because of internal party conflicts and clashes with the then 2 other opposition parties the government in power gave priority only to its party affairs and means and ways to get re-elected in the coming election. To cite one glaring example to show the extremes they went to, the then prime minister proclaimed Buddhism, which has over 80% of the population as its followers in the country, to be the State Religion of Myanmar to canvass votes for his party from the Buddhist majority of the population. At the same time the needs and requirements of the ethnic races were ignored and neglected. Unfortunately, his move created rebellion among the ethnic races professing other religious faiths and automatically led to armed insurrection in the country. Although, it was clear from the very beginning that the then government was wrong in their steps in the first

place, the military had neither voice nor choice but to follow orders in fighting all the insurgent groups the government had created. The fighting lasted 45 years.

## **6. *The Narcotic Drugs Problem***

During the peak of its insurgency in 1949, over 75% of the entire country was in the hands of various armed insurgent groups. Half of Mandalay and the outskirts of Yangon were also under the control of the insurgents. Myanmar was at that time mockingly nicknamed the Rangoon Government by the Western World which also refused to sell the government badly needed arms and ammunition to repel the insurgent groups. The Myanmar Armed Forces together with the people of the country fought and pushed back the armed groups and eventually gained the upper hand. Unfortunately, during this time in 1950, an outside intrusion started to take place in the North East and Eastern borders of Myanmar. The Kuomintang (KMT) troops which were being forced out of Southern Yunnan Province of China by the People's Liberation Army of P.R.C. took refuge and established base camps on Myanmar territory. These activities were encouraged, supported and financed by a western power with the aim of blocking further communist expansion in Asia. After the Second World War, the C.I.A. encouraged the production of opium in this region to help finance its own activities and of its KMT allies. The proceeds were also used to pay for the considerable arsenal of arms supplied to the KMT and the various ethnic groups in Myanmar. During this period two U.S. ambassadors to Myanmar, William J. Sebald and David Mc Key resigned in protest because they were not kept informed of their government's activities in this drug producing area. There is no doubt that these activities sowed the seeds of the current drug production problems in North and North-Eastern Myanmar. Although the KMT were officially flown out of Myanmar under U.N. supervision in the early 60's, remnants of the 2 divisions of KMT were still active on Myanmar's North East and Eastern borders until the time of the drug warlord Khun Sa's surrender about 4 years ago in 1996. It is also interesting to know that the KMT encouraged not only the growing of opium in the Golden Triangle area as well as on the Myanmar-Yunnan border but were also responsible for the refining of opium into heroin and creating heroin markets in the region.

## **7. *War Against Narcotic Drugs***

Since 1974 Myanmar has co-operated with the U.S. Government in the anti-narcotic operations and was highly commended for her efforts by that Government. The U.S. Government assisted Myanmar with \$ 68 million for a period of 14 years starting from 1974 to 1988 mainly in training Myanmar officials and for the spare parts and equipment used in the drug eradication operations. During this period 92 Myanmar law enforcement officials were killed in action while 512 were seriously wounded. A pilot and an aircraft were also lost during the aerial spraying operation. It has also been learnt from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency that Myanmar's efforts managed to stop \$19 billion worth of heroin from reaching the streets of Western countries, mainly the United States. Although the U.S. has cut off its assistance since 1988, Myanmar has without any substantial outside assistance managed from 1988 up to 1996 prevented \$ 45 billion worth of heroin from reaching the U.S. streets. At the same time Myanmar law enforcement officials managed to break the notorious drug army of Khun Sa in the Golden Triangle area and had him surrender unconditionally. Myanmar casualties consisted of 766 law enforcement officials killed in action while 2300 were seriously wounded together with great loss of property as well. In this fight against narcotic drugs the U.S. and the Western World have not only refused to recognize and encourage Myanmar's efforts but are in fact also putting obstacles in her fight against narcotic armies by imposing an arms embargo. The drug armies were given the privilege of using sophisticated weapons to fight against the government troops inflicting heavy casualties while the government troops were using weapons of inferior quality. In other words the U.S. and its western allies are not only refusing to assist Myanmar in her fight against drugs but also making it physically incapable and impossible to do so by their imposition of an arms embargo on Myanmar.

#### ***8. Accusing Myanmar Of Not Being Serious In The Fight Against Narcotic Drugs***

In spite of all the natural obstacles and man-made difficulties imposed by the western nations, Myanmar has managed single-handedly to break the army of the drug warlord Khun Sa with her own limited resources. It was achieved by sacrificing a lot of blood, sweat and tears on the part of the Myanmar Defence Forces and Myanmar law enforcement officials and was enormously commended by the rest of the world for her success and

efforts. Even after Myanmar's success in bringing about the unconditional surrender of Khun Sa resulting in the disbanding of Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army and having Khun Sa himself under the government custody or supervision, the Western World especially the U.S. and U.K. have continued accusing Myanmar of not being serious in the fight against narcotic drugs, for not extraditing Khun Sa to the United States and also for not prosecuting Khun Sa and other ethnic leaders. It is quite interesting to compare the methods implemented by the U.S. and Myanmar in handling such issues. The U.S. prosecuted Noriega and Escobal as a great public relations showcase for the American Government. But if one should raise a query: "Did it stop or reduce the flow of drugs coming to the U.S. from those countries?", the answer is, of course, no. The method Myanmar utilized against Khun Sa after his unconditional surrender was to disband his army and then to have Khun Sa and his top aides under government control and supervision. His troops were sent back to their respective villages to live and work there as normal citizens while the leaders were also given financial and other necessary assistance to start a new life in legitimate businesses. The leaders may have assets abroad but since no country has come up with such information the Myanmar Government has no choice but to take the responsibility of providing them with a new and legitimate life-style so that they can be absorbed into the mainstream of life. So far this method has proven to be realistic in solving the problem although may not be a good move for Public Relations. Moreover, according to our on-ground calculations we have noticed a significant decline in the production of opium although western nations have reported things differently.

However, Myanmar sincerely wishes for the countries that are seriously affected and inflicted by this narcotic drug-menace not only to stop pointing the finger and scapegoating others but also to seriously find more realistic and practical methods to tackle this problem. Pressuring others to accept and carry out methods which have undeniably failed in the past will definitely not help us in our fight against narcotic drugs. In fighting the menace of illicit drugs, the superpowers should realize that constantly putting the blame on a small nation, already overwhelmed and victimized by the introduction of narcotic drugs by others in the past, would be counterproductive and futile. Moreover, in the case of Myanmar, the U.S. Government's adamant and irrational refusal to give recognition to its anti-narcotic endeavours on the one hand and on the other, not caring enough nor doing enough to stop or at least curb the consumer or demand side,



are disconcertingly unrealistic and foolhardy.

### ***9. Methamphetamine (Synthetic Stimulant Drug) Replacing Heroin In The Regional Narcotic Market***

After the surrender of Khun Sa to the Myanmar Government there was a lot of speculation, predictions and views on the future of the drug trade in the Golden Triangle Area and the region. The views of the optimists were very encouraging while others just took a wait and see approach. In this regard, the Myanmar Government was asked to give its views and comments on this matter by various quarters and the response it gave was both realistic and logical. The Government of Myanmar was pleased and delighted to be able to accept Khun Sa's unconditional surrender and has been committed to continuing to stop the entire poppy cultivation and drug (heroin) production in Myanmar as a national objective. The Government believes that without the will of the international community in shouldering their respective responsibilities, Myanmar's all-out fight against narcotic drugs will not be worthwhile nor practical, especially when two of the largest markets for heroin in the world, the U.S. and U.K., refuse to shoulder their special responsibilities to work with the rest of the international community. Their huge markets fuel a global narcotic trade which threatens to affect many countries in the developing world, including Myanmar. Despite this major handicap, Myanmar will continue to actively shoulder its responsibility and fight against this scourge of narcotic drugs with those nations which are also equally committed to make the world or at least their own citizens safe from the danger of drugs.

The international community clearly realizes that lack of participation, interest or will of the countries from the consumer or demand-side will make the task of narcotic drug-elimination almost impossible. Anyhow, Myanmar, being committed and consistent in its policy against drugs, has made its decision to keep on pursuing this war on drugs and is quite optimistic that opium production will steadily decrease. This will also directly cut down the production of heroin.

In this regard, the Government of Myanmar was very much delighted to learn that the U.N. International Drug Control Program gave Myanmar due recognition and praised her efforts and cooperation in the field of narcotic drug-elimination and the UNDCP representative speaking in Bangkok at the launching of the International Narcotics Control Board

1998 reported that Myanmar's opium output for that year had decreased noticeably. Also at the International Heroin Conference held in Yangon in February 1999 the views and comments on Myanmar's drug control efforts were favourable. Yet the U.S. and E.U. representatives boycotted this important forum in the name of democracy and human rights. The Secretary General of the INTERPOL, due to overwhelming pressure, was not able to attend the conference but he sent this message to the meeting. "It is high time the international community becomes acquainted with the excellent work that is being carried out in Myanmar against the illicit production and trafficking of heroin."

In spite of all its efforts and also the recognition from the international community, the Government of Myanmar is still very much concerned about this narcotic drug business, which has been entrenched in the region for over a century. It is also a multibillion-dollar business with many big and powerful players involved including internationally organized criminal syndicates and Myanmar realizes that this war cannot be easily overcome. This is where the world community must seriously and effectively cooperate as a team in order to win this war so that our present and future generations will be able to enjoy the right to a healthy and safe way of life, with freedom from the harm and peril of narcotic drugs.

Generally speaking there seems to be actions and interactions taking place on the surface but there is no denying that real effective cooperation still does not exist. There still is little or no control at all over the drug-related activities of the organized criminal syndicates in the developed countries and these syndicates are threatening many countries in the developing world with their long reach. With this in mind, the Myanmar Anti-Narcotic officials predicted after Khun Sa's surrender that since the narcotic trade is a multibillion-dollar business it cannot be easily suppressed and will continue to exist. Myanmar's efforts in trying to eliminate opium and heroin production are possible, but the success will be short-lived because it foresees other kinds of synthetic stimulant drugs replacing opium-based products in the regional and global drug trade.

Unfortunately a synthetic drug called methamphetamine has forced its way into the regional drug trade today and countries in the region as

well as Myanmar are falling victim to it. But again Myanmar has been conveniently made a scapegoat by various quarters accusing her of being the centre of the production of methamphetamine and the Government of not doing enough or even encouraging the production.

Although this synthetic drug has been produced and marketed in the region for the last 10 years, it is still relatively new in Myanmar. Methamphetamine surfaced in Myanmar just over 2 years ago and the Myanmar Anti-Narcotic officials are cooperating with the countries and organizations that have more experience and expertise in this kind of drug production.

Like all synthetic stimulants certain chemicals are needed for its production. But since Myanmar does not produce any of the essential chemicals required it cannot be denied that these chemicals needed for the production of methamphetamine are being smuggled in from countries that produce them. It is also very important for the responsible authorities of those countries that produce these essential licit chemicals to keep them from falling into the hands of the unscrupulous elements and criminal syndicates. Technically, this synthetic drug can be manufactured anywhere and does not need much space, thereby enabling the operators to manufacture the pills even in a motor van. So the market is already in existence in their own countries and these essential chemicals are also being produced there. It is indeed hard to understand why any drug dealer or organized criminal gang would want to bring in all these essential licit chemicals into the Myanmar jungles on mules and human porters just to manufacture these drugs and again take them out of the jungles and mountains as finished products to their markets in their respective countries. This way of drug-dealing surely is not commercially viable.

Some independent observers and analysts see more to it than meets the eye. They realize that this drug manufactured inside Myanmar or along the borders are destined for the Myanmar market while some are taken back to their own markets in neighbouring countries. But the real motive behind this activity is to create an image in which Myanmar is portrayed

as the country where most of the methamphetamines are being illegally produced for the regional market and to conveniently make Myanmar the scapegoat while depicting others as victim countries.

In spite of all these groundless allegations, the Government of Myanmar does not wish to involve itself in a war of words. It would rather work together with all the countries that have been affected by this scourge and treat the narcotic drugs as an urgent problem which needs to be addressed in a spirit of mutual cooperation by the entire world community. Myanmar also urges those with vested interests to put politics aside for the sake of the millions of people around the world whose lives are threatened by this drug trade.

#### **10. Why Did Khun Sa Give Up His Drug Business Abruptly and Choose to Surrender Unconditionally to Archenemy ?**

The Government of Myanmar was much relieved to realize that decades of combating the Mong Tai Army (MTA) that resulted not only in a very high casualty rate each year but also in having to bear the brunt of a heavy budget incurred annually for such military offensives, have finally come to a halt. The reports and on-ground calculations had indicated that the MTA could still have effectively resisted and repelled the Government's military offensive for a number of years and that they were also quite prepared to do so. This surrender of Khun Sa and his MTA to the Myanmar Government was of great interest to the world community. There were also many speculations from various quarters which were wide off the mark in their analysis and dissection of the surrender.

Quite obviously, there is no denying that Khun Sa being involved in this narcotic trade for many years could be regarded as a walking encyclopedia in this illicit drug business where knowledge could be equated with power. It is also an undeniable fact that some quarters outside the country were neither feeling comfortable nor happy that Khun Sa had surrendered and were even more concerned over the knowledge he possessed. One foreign government even offered a reward of U.S. \$ 2 million for the capture of Khun Sa or on information that would lead to his arrest.

The military assumed State Responsibility in 1988 and on account of various allegations the U.S. and E.U. withdrew all forms of assistance

to Myanmar including that for Narcotic Drugs Control. Apparently, this gave Khun Sa the opportunity to expand his drug production and trafficking to a much larger scale enabling the MTA to become a substantially strengthened and powerful base, both in terms of manpower and finance.

In 1989 and once again in 1994, Khun Sa was twice indicted by the U.S. Government for violation of the Federal Narcotic Laws and a warrant for his arrest was also issued on both occasions. But yet what was more surprising and bizarre was that on 23 April 1994, Mr. Peter Bourne who was an adviser on narcotic affairs to the president of the United States of America, Mr. Jimmy Carter, came to visit him at the MTA headquarters and stayed there for over a week. During his stay there, Khun Sa was advised by Mr. Peter Bourne to find a way to get off the hook by staging political manoeuvres. He indicated that the MTA should strategize in such a way that the international community would come to see and support them as a political force fighting for the independence of the Shan nationals and secession from the Union, rather than a drug army. Also an agreement was dramatically reached for support and assistance in opening representative offices in various western countries after the proclamation of an Independent Shan Nation.

Mr. Bourne himself, during his visit to the MTA headquarters, made a statement there which was broadcast by SBS-TV of Australia in November, 1997 on the program "The Heroin Wars". He was quoted as saying, "I think there is a willingness of the United States and elsewhere to look at the drug issue on a completely different basis and version. I think also it is now very clear that what is happening here in the Shan State is truly a legitimate independence movement in which the drug issue is really a subsidiary part".

Khun Sa followed Mr. Bourne's advice by immediately declaring the area under his control to be an Independent Shan Nation and himself as the President. He also tried in vain to shed his image as a drug warlord and by assuming the colours of a freedom fighter. His proclamation led to an escalation of fighting between the government forces and the MTA resulting in more bloodshed and heaping more hardship upon the ethnic people living in those areas. In that same year Khun Sa was able to establish the representative offices agreed upon in Washington D.C. and New York.

In this context, the question arises: -why was a U.S. President's drug adviser giving such advice to such a person charged by the U.S. Government itself as a drug warlord and would Khun Sa heed such serious advice from a complete stranger? What is more interesting is that, in 1995 a team consisting of two American citizens came to visit Khun Sa and one of them had been visiting the MTA headquarters regularly since 1991. This team had brought with them a proposal to support the MTA with financial assistance, weapons and logistic support in return for the establishment of a cruise missile base in the MTA-controlled area. Khun Sa, understanding the complexity and sensing the imminent danger that would fall upon him and his people in agreeing to such a dastardly plan, he had enough sense and decency to turn down the offer. He also realized that by refusing to comply to this proposal definitely numbered his days hastening him to leave his lucrative business with an abrupt finality.

Then again the crucial question here is -Why did Khun Sa not surrender or just disappear conveniently somewhere else instead of the choosing to turn himself in to the archenemy he had been fighting for decades?

Since his surrender Khun Sa has been under the protective custody of the Myanmar authorities, and has to abide by the conditions stipulated for his surrender. The process of offering a deal to a criminal in exchange for evidence is a global practice, particularly prevalent in the U.S. Why then did the U.S. proclaim so publicly its fears that the Government of Myanmar would offer Khun Sa deal? Obviously, the U.S. Government would be happier to have such unequivocal evidence to use for its own ends. But then, why or what exactly was the U.S. after? It would be too simplistic to assume that the U.S. Government just wanted to put Khun Sa behind bars for life in an American prison.

## ***11. Myanmar's Foreign Policy***

Since Myanmar regained her independence from the British in 1948 she chose to pursue an active and independent foreign policy from the very beginning. She left the British Commonwealth and adopted a neutral and later a non-aligned policy throughout the Cold War period.

In pursuance of such a policy she has been accorded some pluses

mainly enabling her to stay out of the regional conflicts. The minuses are that she has neither developed capitalist nor communist alliances. When Myanmar became a socialist country after the end of its parliamentary era the Western World regarded her as a pro-communist state while the Socialist World upheld her as a sort of a pseudo socialist country.

During this period Myanmar more or less stayed away from the regional and international crisis with doors partly closed eventually leading her to a self-imposed seclusion in pursuit of her own ideals.

### ***12. Myanmar's Strict Neutrality***

Since she regained her independence, Myanmar has proved to countries near and far that she is “**Everybody's friend but nobody's ally**”. Myanmar --one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)-- left the organization in 1979 considering the movement to have strayed from its original course. She later rejoined the movement in 1992 realizing that the stance of the organization was in accordance with her objectives of strict neutrality and non-alignment. The strict neutrality which she has displayed in the region during the difficult times has been appreciated and she has now gained trust and confidence in the neighbourhood as well as in the region. In spite of the end of the Cold War, Myanmar is still faithfully pursuing her policy of being everyone's friend but still no one's ally. Unfortunately, her natural and inborn policy has not been accepted today on account of the imposition of the will of a solitary superpower. Today's concept virtually imposed on Myanmar is that she either has to become an ally or an opponent.

### ***13. Development During The Period The Military Government Assumed State Responsibilities***

Today after the Military Government (State Law & Order Restoration Council - SLORC) assumed state responsibilities in September 1988 the Government has managed to bring 17.5 of the 18 armed insurgent groups into the legal fold and also has achieved success in bringing the drug warlord Khun Sa to surrender unconditionally. This is an astounding major achievement for Myanmar since it is the first time in her modern history she has managed to establish national unity, peace and stability.

Even though Myanmar is very rich in natural resources, due to the

lack of peace and stability, Myanmar has lagged behind in development compared to other ASEAN countries. During the crisis in 1988 over 65% of the industry in Yangon(capital city) was destroyed and looted while 118 policemen were injured, 35 policemen killed and 15 police stations were overrun by the unruly mob. Simultaneously, 52 innocent civilians were tried by *kangaroo courts* and beheaded by the unruly mob while an infantry platoon guarding a ministry building was also overrun. Moreover, the weapons, ammunition and explosives from the police stations and the infantry platoon, were taken away by the disorderly mob while the insurgents managed to bring explosives and weapons into the cities as well. Anarchism was therefore rampant in the country. The Burmese Communist insurgents were attacking the Government troops in the North East and Eastern borders while the Kayin insurgents attacked the South Eastern borders.

During this chaotic period the Armed Forces of Myanmar had no choice but to use whatever means available to restore Law and Order in the nation while repelling the attacking insurgent groups. In fact, the Armed Forces of Myanmar managed to save the country from disintegrating and from becoming a war zone. But unfortunately the international media and the western world portrayed a different picture of the Myanmar Armed Forces depicting it as a ruthless trigger-happy bunch of thugs shooting and killing civilians and repressing democratic activities. Their so-called heroes of democracy were at that time not only helpless but were staying well out of the way from the scene of rampage.

The military government, the then State Law and Order Restoration Council after assuming the state responsibilities suspended the One-Party Socialist System and the Socialist Economy to pursue a Multi-Party Democratic System with a Market-Oriented Economy. In the transition period the Market-Oriented Economy was introduced and implemented in the economic sector while on the political sector, priority was given to an emergence of a new Constitution which will be compatible with the Multi-Party Democratic System and which will also ensure peace and stability among the national races in the country. With this in mind the 1990 elections were held with the sole objective of electing the representatives to draft a new constitution. Unfortunately, after the election the party winning the majority of the seats, instead of meeting its obligations changed its tune and demanded the immediate transfer of power.



Logically, the country at that time had no constitution in place so the military as a transitional and a caretaker government ran the country by imposing martial law. But for a political party to run the country imposing martial law would not only be inappropriate but also impossible and even the very basic questions posed by people from all walks of life went unanswered. These were; (a) *How would the National League for Democracy (NLD) party form a government?* (b) *For how many years will the NLD run the country as a government in the interim period?* These are very simple basic questions to which the NLD never had an answer yet it still went on demanding the handing over of state power overnight. In Myanmar at that time, most of the armed groups which have now returned to the legal fold were still very active as insurgents and the situation was very fluid and tense.

#### ***14. Practising Universal Rules In The Protection Of National Security And Interest***

More specifically and importantly what most people do not realize is that in many instances Ms. Suu Kyi is erroneously referred to as an elected person or in some instances as an elected president. Ms. Suu Kyi never stood for the election because she was not eligible to contest a seat. It was not this present military government or the previous socialist government that refused Ms. Suu Kyi the right to stand for elections but ironically it was her own father, Myanmar national hero General Aung San, who wrote into the original constitution, subsequently promulgated in 1948, a clause with the provision that "*any person who is under any acknowledgement of allegiance or adherence to a foreign power, or a subject or citizen is entitled to the rights and privileges of a subject or citizen of a foreign power.*" Thus she is not entitled to contest a seat in the country's elections. Ms. Suu Kyi resided abroad for twenty-eight years and married an Englishman (Giving her the rights to U.K. citizenship) and has 2 children both holding British citizenship. This present military government has to, as all the previous successive Myanmar Governments did, continue to honour this clause and the present national convention has also committed itself to continue to honour the said clause. This type of constitutional condition is implemented by many governments including those of developed nations. It is quite understandable that Governments do not wish to have someone in office who could be unduly influenced by any other nation or power. As a preventive measure certain rules and regulations are

universally drawn up and put into effect to serve as a mechanism to protect the national security as well as the national interest of the respective countries.

There is also another false assumption where her being under house restriction during the election period denied her the right to run for the 1990 election. While under house restriction the Government of Myanmar consented to Ms. Suu Kyi's request to contest the election representing Bahan Township Constituency(1) and her name was enrolled on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1989. Objections were lodged by various individuals and political parties against the permission granted to Ms. Suu Kyi to contest the forthcoming elections with reference to the provisions of the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law of 1989. Legally, granting Ms. Suu Kyi the right to contest the election was found to violate and contravene the following 3 articles.

- (1) Section (8-b) *"Law for people residing in the Union of Myanmar."*

Ms. Suu Kyi has given her permanent address where she resides with her husband Dr. Michael Aris and 2 sons at 15, Park Town, Oxford, in United Kingdom. Ms. Suu Kyi's name has not been registered at her mother's residence in Yangon which indicates that she is not a permanent resident of Myanmar.

- (2) Section (10-e). *" Persons who are under any acknowledgement of allegiance or adherence to a foreign power, or are subjects or citizens or entitled to the rights and privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign Power."*

Ms. Suu Kyi enjoys the right to reside in U.K. indefinitely. Apart from the right to vote, she enjoys all the other privileges of a British Citizen.

- (3) Section (10-h). *" Members of organization in armed revolt against the State, persons against whom there is sufficient grounds of having links with the said organization or with its members to revolt."*

Ms. Suu Kyi was found to be communicating, collaborating

and harbouring a member of the armed terrorist group and this terrorist was arrested in her residential compound in Yangon together with substantial evidence.

Due to the above mentioned factors Ms. Suu Kyi was found ineligible to contest the 1990 elections. Technically it was not because she was under house restriction during the election time. More importantly, Section 10-e of the May 1989 Election Law was not a provision drawn up by the present military government but was originally drafted by her own father, General Aung San, the National Leader of Modern Myanmar in his (1947) Independence Constitution which was later to be honoured and again put in the (1974) Constitution.

Again, in a similar scenario the NLD party is constantly and erroneously referred to as an opposition party. In fact, the Government of Myanmar does not regard the NLD or any other 9 legally existing political parties as opposition parties since the Government regards itself not as a political party but as a transitional government (A National Institution) taking the responsibility of discarding the Socialist One-Party System practising a Socialist Economy and paving the way for a Multi-Party Democracy by introducing a Market-Oriented Economy. In the meantime, for the benefit and interest of the nation, this present government is in the process of establishing and founding national unity, peace, stability and all-round development in the country so that Myanmar shall become in a reasonable period of time, a peaceful, prosperous and modern developed nation.

### ***15. Drafting Of A New Constitution***

Myanmar has had 2 different types of constitution since she regained her independence from the British. The first independence constitution was drafted in 1947 by General Aung San and it was done in haste because the British demanded that Myanmar produce a constitution as quickly as possible or they would not grant independence. The drafting of the independence constitution was more or less drafted to the desire of the British Colonialists with the result that serious flaws were embedded in the constitution. Nevertheless, what General Aung San had in mind was to amend the constitution in conformity with Myanmar's requirements after regaining independence from the British. Unfortunately, it never took place because according to the recent release of sensitive documents to the

British media, the pre-independence assassination of General Aung San and his Cabinet ministers and the Kayin insurgency that began around 1947-48 were stage-managed by the Britain-based "*Friends of Burma Hill People*" with definite links to the Colonial Conservative Government of Britain. Later on, after regaining independence, Myanmar suffered the consequences of the insurgencies and on top of it, she faced secession by some of her national races after 10 years of independence which was one of the major flaws in the constitution. In 1962 after General Ne Win took over State Power the first and original 1947 constitution was abolished and in 1974 a new one-party socialist constitution came into existence. But again in 1988 the second constitution of 1974 was abolished for the Multi-Party Democratic System.

The two constitutions were promulgated based on a system of confirmation by a majority of the plebiscite. But in Myanmar, where 70% of the population is Bamar, the military regarded the old balloting system as not fair and democratic, and has changed the system to that of consensus. By this consensus method the military believes that although the ethnic races may be small in number they shall have a louder voice in the parliament whereas the old system never gave the ethnic races any chance to get their voice heard or their desires appreciated finally creating frustration and anger. This eventually led to armed insurgency and the military being an institution which is a neutral body in the country which comprises all the national races, is regarded as a sort of U.N. organization in one's own country. The military is not interested in party politics but when it comes to national affairs the military has the obligation to fulfil her commitments and that is what she is at the moment fulfilling. The big political parties, of course, do not like the method or system the military is employing as they are being inhibited in playing their party politics the way they want without giving any consideration to the stability of the entire nation. Myanmar after independence, during the parliamentary democracy era had 2 to 3 political parties which concentrated so much of their efforts only on party politics that they eventually created armed insurrection all over the country which the military government has had to inherit today. The military did not create any of the insurgencies but has instead taken the responsibility and initiative of bringing them into the legal fold and making them give up their armed insurrection. In 1990, before the military government held

elections in the country, there were a total of 237 political parties from which 91 parties contested the elections. Today 10 parties still exist legally and are involved in the drafting of the new national constitution. The country has gone through bad times because of the way the political parties acted in the past and also because of the inherent weakness of the former constitutions. Today, to keep the country perpetually stable and to have a functioning democracy Myanmar has to have a strong and everlasting constitution which will keep the country on the proper track. The present military transitional government is meeting her commitments while hoping and expecting the political parties especially the NLD will meet theirs so that Myanmar will become a functioning democracy within a reasonable time frame.

### ***16. Human Rights Issues And Democracy***

This is a controversial issue which creates a lot of misunderstanding among nations. Whatever human rights mean to various nations with different economic, social, historical, cultural and traditional values, human rights for a third world country like Myanmar mean the rights to enjoy basic human requirements such as *(a) Security (b) Food (c) Shelter*. Myanmar is at the moment trying to fulfil these basic essential requirements and after doing so will move on to another set of necessities such as health and education followed by economic development. In fact she is now in the process of promoting health, education and the economy. Myanmar can even challenge the U.S. in the Government's commitment and obligation in fulfilling the basic human rights in their own respective countries. *(A) In the United States security can never be guaranteed in most of the U.S. cities. For example, can its citizens enjoy security out in the streets of most cities especially after dark? (B) There are people out in the U.S. streets who are facing starvation and (C) Homeless people living in card-board boxes and parks freezing to death during the winter season.*

In Myanmar today security in her cities is fully guaranteed for the people while peace and tranquillity prevail even in the border areas for the first time in her modern history. Starvation is a word alien to the people of Myanmar and Myanmar does not have homeless people who die of neglect by their own Government. Myanmar today is implementing the project called *"From Huts To Proper Houses Scheme."* All her citizens are being taken care of by the Government to have a proper home to live in. The

Government of Myanmar is also in the process of promoting her economy for the benefit of her people. Priorities are given for the promotion of the economy so that a strong middle class will emerge. The Government of Myanmar foresees the situation that only when a strong middle class emerges will a functioning democracy prevail in the country. The Western Nations' theory of democracy first, democracy second and democracy third has not only failed in many developing countries but has created instability and chaos, and for how long those countries will continue to suffer we do not know.

In Myanmar, since the country is in the process of rebuilding a new nation, unity, stability and the promotion of all-round development are being given priority. The full right to practise party politics is not high up on her agenda because the nation needs all her strength for nation-rebuilding and national unity at the moment. The time will come after the new constitution is drafted, and before the elections, for political parties to do party politicking but not at this stage where party politicking by 10 political parties will affect the national unity and drain away her strength. Trying to force Myanmar to deviate from her original path and pressuring her to accept the interests of foreign governments under the pretext of democracy and human rights is very much detrimental to the national interests of the Myanmar people. Imposing sanctions and other pressures on her indicates the West's real intention which is, *"hypocrisy but not democracy and might is right but not human right"*.

Myanmar must and will start to build up her democratic institution with a solid foundation first and from there on it will expand and develop into a much higher level. No country in the world can expect to achieve a functioning democracy in the reverse. It is like expecting or forcing a child to run before first learning how to walk properly. It would be interesting if the so-called democracies would only look back on the stages they had to go through to become what they are at present. It will be more interesting to know how long it took for them to become what they are now.

### ***17. Basic Universal Human Rights In Myanmar***

More importantly for a country like Myanmar which has recently achieved national reconciliation with its different national races which fought against all the previous successive governments, the Myanmar Government has, as most developing countries in the East, been prioritizing

community rights at this stage of her development rather than giving priority to individual rights like the developed countries. One of Myanmar's top priorities is to provide her citizens with security, one of the basic human rights. Myanmar believes that her citizens must enjoy essential basic rights such as security and safety of their lives and property, a decent job which will help put enough food on the table for their families and also a decent place for them to live in.

The Myanmar Government and her people do admire the rights the American citizens enjoy and one day when her basic requirements are fulfilled Myanmar might emulate some of the rights the American people are enjoying. But at this moment the Myanmar Government as well as the people of Myanmar are quietly concerned that in the United States the basic universal human rights such as security and protection of citizens, properties and lives have been overshadowed and sidetracked by other individual rights. Myanmar and many other countries in the world are shocked by the increasing violence in the U.S. The schoolyard shooting at Arkansas by 2 boys and the unfortunate incident of the murder of two police officers at the Capitol Hill which both occurred in 1998 are a few of the shocking examples of the absence of basic human rights in the United States. Such is not the case in Myanmar as has been cited by the U.S. Government.

In reality, the overwhelming majority of the people in Myanmar as elsewhere in the third world countries, are not obsessed with politics. They do not see freedom solely in terms of the right to vote periodically and demonstrate and express political views publicly.

The demand for the freedom to exercise full political rights will come when Myanmar reaches a more mature stage where the unity of the 135 ethnic groups living together in the country becomes stronger and when the fundamental needs of the population have been fulfilled to a much higher level. It is unrealistic for other nations to force Myanmar to be on a par with them in giving their citizens political rights when Myanmar must and should be at her very stage of development prioritizing national unity, peace, stability and developing her economy with an aim of creating a strong middle class.

Breaking the fragile and hard-won peace, stability and national unity by introducing excessive political rights at this stage of development would

deprive Myanmar of her chance to start building up her democratic institutions with a solid foundation first and will end up becoming a non-functioning pseudo democracy.

### ***18. Allegations On Exercising Forced Labour in Myanmar***

This allegation has been widely and conveniently used against the Government of Myanmar by certain quarters to disseminate disinformation in the attempt to portray her as a cruel and wicked regime. Myanmar since ancient times enjoys the tradition and practice of voluntary contribution of labour in the religious and social sectors. It has continued its traditional practice up to this day but surprisingly this allegation of the use of forced labour suddenly appeared only after the State Law and Order Restoration Council Government came into existence. Since then this allegation has been intensifying apparently as part of the smear campaign against the Myanmar Government. This traditional practice of Voluntary Contribution of Labour is not a new system created by this government but ironically, a law Britain enacted under the British Towns and Villages Act of 1907 when they were governing Myanmar. The British exercised this law under the terminology “*A General or Individual Requisition to Assist in Execution of Public Duties*” and this same law Myanmar inherited from Britain after regaining independence has been recently relabelled by some western countries into a new terminology “*Execution of Forced Labour*”. Still this unbecoming forced labour allegation, similar to those other allegations (such as the government’s involvement in trafficking narcotic drugs, religious intolerance, ethnic cleansing and being a threat to the U.S. national security, etc.) has been fabricated and blown out of proportion while falsely depicting the practice as a form of slave labour where people are whipped, kicked and chained to work on government projects.

To go deeper into the subject of forced labour the initial allegation levelled against the Myanmar Government was **FORCED PORTERAGE**. This is also a practice employed in countries where motorable road access is poor or nonexistent and when the armies are not mechanized. Especially in a country like Myanmar where most of the battles are being fought in jungles and mountainous regions, strong and healthy men from the nearby villages are employed when necessary to carry the sick and the wounded, reserve medical and food supplies as well as ammunition just like the British Expeditionary Force headed by Gen. Wingate operated in the Burma



Campaign together with the Chindits during the Second World War.

Unfortunately, after the Second World War and after regaining her independence from Britain, the newly independent Myanmar up until recently had to encounter all the hardship and suffering of having to face external incursion and internal insurgency for more than five decades. This resulted in the Myanmar Defence Forces becoming one of the toughest armies in the region and a sufferer of the highest casualty rate in the world. It was at the same time not only one of the ill-equipped forces in the world but the pay itself was unattractive as well. But in spite of all these handicaps the Myanmar Armed Forces have always been a voluntary army where no forced recruiting has ever been practised. To draw comparison, in the early 70's during the Vietnam War Era, draft dodging was quite common among U.S. citizens when Uncle Sam was busy drafting America's youths whereas in Myanmar, in spite of all the difficult conditions a soldier has to encounter, Myanmar Armed Forces had no difficulty in finding volunteers. To cite one example, in the recruitment of officers, the Defence Services Academy selects only around 100 candidates out of over 10,000 applicants each year for the annual intake.

It is not surprising when the strength of all the insurgent armies combined outnumbered the regular government forces, giving the government troops not much breathing space. It had to face constant fighting. At the same time, in order for the government troops to be able to protect and secure those areas effectively it became necessary for the local villagers in the area to help provide the troops with much needed logistic support. Without the logistic support in the jungles the government troops cannot fight effectively to win the battles for the local population. It is, from the nation's point of view, a national obligation of the citizens of the country to help those who volunteer to sacrifice their lives in defending and safeguarding the country's national security. Ironically, the troops do not wish to employ civilian porters in military operations because villagers are not trained and are likely to jeopardize the whole operation, but again because of lack of other means and measures, the employment of civilian porters cannot be avoided. Also the insurgents operating in the remote border areas do employ villagers as porters but as the operations are waged in their respective areas they do not have much logistic problems. But the government troops take at least about a week in marching and

trekking through the mountainous and thick jungles just to reach those remote areas. Naturally, the soldiers having to carry their own weapons, ammunition, food supply, clothing and etc., are exhausted by the time they are in their assigned area. With lack of proper food and rest their physical weakness becomes a target for malarial attacks. There are many strains of malaria and this disease is still one of the deadliest killers. According to the Japanese historical archives, at the near end of the Second World War, over 200,000 soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army died while serving and retreating in the Myanmar jungles due mostly to hunger and physical weakness which in turn became targets for malarial attacks. Today, the Myanmar Army is still vulnerable to a deadlier strain of malaria in the same jungles in spite of modern medical preventive care and treatment.

In the employment of porters the government troops have to request the village chiefs in the area to provide a certain number of able bodied men. These men when reaching the next village will be replaced by a new group of fresh men. But complication does arise when there are not enough men in the next village or if there are no other villages in the area. Unfortunately, porters become a necessity in this kind of war and this issue can only be resolved when peace prevails in the country. With this in mind the military government since assuming state power in 1988 concentrated in establishing national reconciliation to bring peace and stability to the nation. In other words, the government instead of trying to win the battles tried to win the hearts of the ethnic minorities and managed to break the vicious cycle of war. Fortunately, this goal has been achieved and the use of porters in combat area has been resolved, having become something of the past.

Now, to touch upon the controversial subject of exercising **SLAVE LABOUR** as has been alleged against the Myanmar Government by some western nations, Myanmar has been a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) since regaining independence from Britain in 1948 and has ratified 19 ILO Conventions. Myanmar being a responsible member of the organization has a long record of cooperation and no major issues related to labour standards had ever existed before.

But since early 1990 some western nations, interest groups and anti-government sectors have begun attempting to exploit the organization

in a politically motivated move to further apply political pressure on Myanmar under the pretext of protecting workers' rights in Myanmar. While lip service is paid to the Myanmar workers' rights, the real motive is to have Myanmar pushed into isolation by having it expelled from every international organization including the U.N.

The present Myanmar Government in recent years has established peace and accord with almost all of the ethnic groups which resisted all the successive governments since regaining her independence. These ethnic groups are now peacefully involved in the current drafting process of the new constitution. Before this new constitution comes into existence, these former insurgent armies in order to maintain their own security in the remote border areas are being allowed to hold on to their weapons within their designated areas. These armies will lay down their arms only when a new constitution comes into existence and in the meantime, confidence-building measures are taking place between the government and the ethnic groups. In the confidence-building process the areas which were once under the ethnic armies and those areas which are regarded as no man's land are being worked together by both sides for area development. In doing so, joint cooperation in building the much needed basic infrastructure, elimination of narcotic drug (poppy), health, education, telecommunications and all-round development projects are being systematically implemented.

In infrastructure building such as motor roads, railroads, reservoirs and dams, intensive human labour has to be employed to have the projects implemented on account of the lack of proper construction equipment and machinery. In the employment of labour for these projects the ministry concerned will bring in construction workers (white and blue collar) while the government troops together with the troops of the former ethnic insurgent armies work together hand in hand with whatever available meagre equipment and machinery in their possession. In some areas when and where more workforce is needed, the villages in these areas are requested through the local administration to provide extra workers. This civilian workforce consisting of local villagers will then join forces with other groups and work together for completion of the project. Once the project in the area is completed the local villagers and the former ethnic army troops will stay behind to enjoy the fruits of development while the government troops will have to move on to other areas to continue to be involved in other development projects. The daily wages for labour are

usually paid individually or sometimes upon request a contribution is made in the form of building a public library, religious edifices, small scale water reservoir etc. for the village community and usually the cost exceeds their combined wages. There are many times where the ministry concerned will have to contribute the amount of cash which falls short of, in order to actually complete the construction of the building requested by the local community. This is done as a good-will gesture being appreciated by the local community.

But there also are times when payment is not required or accepted when the work is done for the social or religious sector where labour is regarded as a meritorious contribution to the community. But in big scale projects such as railroads and road construction, many of these projects are constructed using only the troops in the respective areas. There are times when the offers of villagers in the vicinity to participate in the construction projects whether individually or collectively are refused in order to avoid the intensifying of forced labour allegations. Myanmar, a developing small nation, has very limited resources to build the essential basic infrastructural needs. As the much needed assistance and cooperation for her nation rebuilding process are being denied and prevented by the same countries accusing her of forced labour, Myanmar has no choice but to employ whatever means available to bring development so that the people of Myanmar will be able to enjoy a better and a fuller life.

It is regretful that the development of the people of Myanmar is being hampered by the same nations expressing their desire to bestow Myanmar people with human rights but who are in reality depriving the Myanmar people of their rights to development and prosperity.

Myanmar is still at a very young stage of her development where assistance, cooperation and encouragement from the international community are required to expedite her transformation peacefully, successfully and stably to a sustainable democracy. Myanmar is at present rebuilding a new nation out of a war torn country, where in 1988 the military took over state power and inherited a country with a single digit in federal reserves and where over 65% of the industrial base in the capital city had been destroyed, with chaos, anarchy and armed insurrection prevailing in the country. Although Myanmar regained her independence

from Britain in 1948, it was only around 1992 that dramatic changes in all-round development, especially in the sector of national reconciliation, started to take place.

Most of the ethnic groups who had waged war against successive central governments since Independence, have said in no uncertain terms, that they have been able to enjoy the benefits of independence only after reaching peace agreement with this military government. For it has brought peace, stability, and development to their respective regions. It would not be wrong to say that the fruits of independence were only being enjoyed by various ethnic groups living in border areas from the time they made peace with the present government.

It is most essential for Myanmar to be able to maintain her peace and stability and to be able to go into the developmental phases. For a third world country like Myanmar to be able to become a developed nation much effort on her part and assistance from the world community are necessary. But when the much needed assistance is sanctioned and embargoed by the big and powerful nations, Myanmar in its desire to rejoin the mainstream and to develop and create a better and a fuller life for its population has no choice but to use whatever means available in its possession.

The United States regained her independence in 1776 - some 172 years before Myanmar's independence in 1948 and it was only in the mid 60's after nearly 200 years that the Blacks had the right to vote ending the racial segregation in the human rights sector. It is also quite interesting to learn how the U.S. developed its railroad infrastructure in the early stages of her development by using the Chinese coolies and the Blacks as slaves to promote its cotton industry. This indicates the fact that nothing could be gained overnight and the U.S. took nearly 200 years in the improvement of her human rights situation and sector.

Today, Myanmar is also going through the relatively similar stages the United States went through centuries ago in the rebuilding of a nation. Unfortunately, those countries which reached the stage of early development, instead of helping the less fortunate countries to reach the same objective in a shorter period of time by sharing their wealth and experience, are hampering the peaceful evolution Myanmar is going through

at this stage of her development. Their constant negative attitude, irresponsible actions and unrealistic expectations are pushing Myanmar into becoming an unstable country practising a non-sustainable democracy if not actually pushing her into isolation again.

### **19. Government Of Myanmar In Cooperation With Various NGOs And Religious Organizations To Safeguard The Rights Of The Child**

The Government of Myanmar has acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since July, 1991 and shares the concern raised by the Coalition To Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

Unfortunately, certain quarters have recently stepped up its media campaign against Myanmar by distorting and fabricating stories to discredit the Government of Myanmar. But interestingly according to the 1998 Amnesty International Report on the U.S.A there are only two countries in the world that have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. One is Somalia and the other is the U.S.A. The U.S.A has repeatedly blocked the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which would prohibit the recruitment of people under the age of 18 into armed forces and their participation in hostilities.

During the time of Vietnam war several hundred thousand young Americans were forcefully conscripted into the U.S. military which resulted in a death toll reported to be around 55,000 American boys at the end of the war. There were also many others who faced disfigurement, sufferings as well as psychological and physical pain.

On the contrary, the Myanmar Armed Forces is a voluntary army and the underage are not allowed to apply for recruitment. But, sometimes in some rural areas the underage lie about their age and come up with false identity papers to the recruiting stations making it difficult for the responsible officials to verify. Apart from those rare instances the Government prohibits the enlistment of the underage.

Regretfully, today we are witnessing armed terrorist groups around the world systematically conscripting children as soldiers for their respective organizations. For instance, if we look closely into the present position of the last of the militant armed terrorist groups called the Kayin National Union (KNU), we will find that majority of the KNU members are frustrated with their leadership's policy of armed terrorism since 1949 which they have pursued. They are also disillusioned with the promise of

creating an independent Kayin Nation when in reality the entire Kayin population living peacefully together with other national races is against breaking away from the Union of Myanmar. These circumstances have led over 70% of its members, both Buddhist and Christian to leave the KNU and are now living peacefully in the country, actively participating and contributing meaningfully to developing the Kayin State together with the people and the Government of Myanmar. It is an undeniable fact that a certain level of success in social and economic development has been achieved in most of the Kayin State, but due to KNU activities progress in some places in the Kayin State have been hampered. It is also quite obvious that the KNU has been surviving by the monetary assistance and support given from various interest groups from outside the country. But many of the remaining KNU members are also leaving the organization creating difficulty for the KNU to sustain and effectively carry out their terrorist activities. As a result they are now systematically concentrating on conscripting villagers, including young children. The 2 Kayin boys like Johnny and Luther Htoo are one such example where children are being exploited by such groups. The Government of Myanmar is in cooperation with various NGOs and religious organizations to safeguard these vulnerable children and provide them with food, shelter, education, good-health and a peaceful life while it prevents them from being exploited not only by armed terrorist groups but also other various unsavoury manipulators with vested interests.

## ***20. Myanmar Accused of Exercising Religious Intolerance***

Myanmar is a country which prides herself on the fact that all the major religions of the world flourish side by side in complete harmony and understanding. Successive Myanmar Governments have encouraged and supported various religions so that their followers may profess their faith peacefully and freely. Today, the present Myanmar Government is not only continuing the same policy but also in the process of promoting and cooperating with religions of all faiths in Myanmar. But at the same time to keep all the religions in harmony, certain regulations and measures must be adhered to by all religions for their own good. Because of this standard practice and understanding, Myanmar does not suffer or experience situations where one religion comes into serious conflict with another. Some foreign governments and organizations without understanding or

appreciating such factors are irresponsibly accusing Myanmar of exercising religious intolerance. In today's world there are a lot of outstanding examples of religious conflicts and upheavals the most notable of which are in Europe, Middle East, the United States and South Asia.

A case in point--in the United States in 1994, there was an incident in Texas (Waco), where the religious cult leader and his followers including women and children, some 70 people, were killed as the result of a siege by the Federal and State police.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. State Department's allegations against Myanmar for the so-called religious persecution reveal its lack of basic knowledge and misperceptions regarding the situation and concept of religions in Myanmar. For example, the State Department stated that, in December 1996, the Government of Myanmar ordered the removal of Christian, Chinese and Buddhist graves from the Kyandaw Cemetery in Yangon to make way for a planned real estate development. In the Kyandaw Cemetery there are Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Islamic cemeteries all located in one area. A large part of these grounds was mainly occupied by a Buddhist cemetery sharing some of its portions with other religions. This cemetery in the olden days used to be on the outskirts of the city but today with the population growing and the city expanding, the cemetery became now part of the inner city zone.

To remedy the situation the Government allocated new burial grounds for all religions and is also constructing a new orphanage for the 100 orphans currently staying at a religious edifice in the cemetery grounds. The orphans will eventually move to the new facility when the construction work is completed in their (100 ft x100 ft) compound. This new compound was donated by Yangon City Development Committee which took the responsibility for construction of a new building in that compound. The Kyandaw cemetery ground has now been cleared up and will be turned into a Multi-Religion Square where the respective religions will erect monuments. The square therefore embraces a long term vision of religious harmony in Myanmar. This former cemetery will not be used for any other purpose but only for the Multi-Religion Square where the four religions will establish their respective monuments in designated areas. Also the 14 families living in the religious edifice in the Kyandaw grounds were given appropriate monetary assistance and each family was given a free plot of



land to build new houses. Suitable compensation was also given for the old buildings on the cemetery grounds.

Before implementing this project, relevant authorities from all religions involved were invited to conduct cordial and cooperative discussions, and implementation took place only after consent was reached. Foreign ambassadors in Yangon and Myanmar ambassadors abroad have been informed of the situation and the undertaking by the relevant authorities, hoping that the project and its objectives would be fully appreciated and negative and malicious rumours that could cause misunderstanding and chaos among religions be effectively eliminated. Moreover, this project is believed to be one of the first of its kind in the world where monuments from different religions will be erected to symbolize peace, harmony and unity among the four different faiths prominent in Myanmar. This is a worthy project to promote harmony among different creeds and the U.S. should try to emulate it instead of belittling it.

Recently, the U.S. State Department charged the Government of Myanmar of systematically using force to propagate Buddhism, the dominant creed, over other religions and also of restricting Buddhist monks in the promotion of human rights and political freedom. It is regretful that the U.S. State Department is not aware that Buddhism does not propagate its faith by force. It is against the fundamental belief and doctrine of Buddhism to act in such a manner. Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar devotes itself most faithfully to this injunction. More importantly, the tenets of Theravada Buddhism strictly prohibit monks from participating in any kind of political or commercial activities. Myanmar is one of the very few countries in the world where all the major religions live together harmoniously and peacefully and where freedom of religion is actually practised. There may be isolated cases of minor disagreements as happen sometimes and is happening elsewhere in the world. But prompt action taken by the Government in cooperation with the religious leaders of the respective religions has always managed to prevent any kind of religious incidents from flaring out of control and the occurrence of incidents has also been resolved peacefully.

Children participating in the construction of religious temples cannot be viewed as child labour or forced labour since the workforce comes to participate on their own free will with the consent and blessing of their

parents or guardians. According to the Buddhist belief, no one can deny them the right in taking an action counted as a good deed. This free will, in fact, can be regarded as freedom of choice and meritorious observance of the tenets of the Buddhism. What is of significant interest is that on June 20, 2000 the BBC broadcast a report made by the New York based Human Rights Watch. This report says; "Hundreds of thousands of children are working on U.S. farms under dangerous and gruelling conditions." And that "...its conditions in some U.S. farming areas are like those in many developing countries. Children in their early teens or younger get paid well below the minimum wage to work up to 14 hours a day preventing them from getting an education."

Also, a team consisting of the founder/convener of the South Asian Forum for Human Rights and the recipient of the Award for Abu Sayeed Chowdhury Human Rights in Social Service (1987) and Magsaysay Award for International Understanding (1987) Reverend Richard W. Timm, CSC and the Chairperson of Ain O Salish Kendra, Gano Shahajji Sangstha and Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights and National Consultant, GRAMEEN Courts Project (UNDP Project), Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs of Bangladesh, Justice K.M. Subhan visited Myanmar during January, 1998 to look into various humanitarian aspects. The team had worked on human rights, legal and humanitarian issues for over four decades, in Bangladesh, Southeast Asia and elsewhere. During their visits to a number of villages and local communities which they had selected in the Mon and Kayin States and after having interviews with the locals freely, they came up with the following remarks in their official reports which were submitted to the U.S. Congress: *"There is marked religious and ethnic harmony which makes it possible for all religious and ethnic groups to live and work freely together"* and *" This is the largest village, with a population of 10,000 and is the administrative center for the region. We saw a good example of communal harmony in that a Hindu temple, Buddhist pagoda, Muslim mosque and Baptist church were on the same road, one after another. The Muslims we talked to said that they number about 100 families and they live in harmony with all without discrimination. They are constructing a new mosque on the old site"*.

In a similar instance, an editor and publisher of the Bangladesh weekly economic newspaper **Economic Times** came to visit Myanmar in September, 1999 and after his visit he wrote an article entitled, "*Myanmar-*

*-A Model for Developing Nations". The article appeared in the **Economic Times** as well as in many other popular dailies in Bangladesh. In his article the author stated "Yangon is a city of Pagodas and Temples, but Mosque and Churches are there and people are free to perform their religious rites which probably are not allowed even in some of the countries who were instrumental in the imposition of sanctions on Myanmar."*

The Government of Myanmar believes that it is absolutely improper and insensitive to accuse other nations or governments on the basis of hearsay evidence. Religion is a highly sensitive and volatile issue in every country and such irresponsible comments and statements should be totally avoided. Ironically, the countries accusing Myanmar of religious intolerance are themselves experiencing religious conflicts, reminding us of a popular western expression "*People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.*"

## **21. Recovered Remains of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War American Airmen Stranded for 5 years in Myanmar When Offer to Deliver by Host Country Ignored**

In November 1987 a U.S. diplomat from the American Embassy in Yangon came to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with some information of a plane that went down during the World War II in northern Myanmar and requested help to search for it. The Government of Myanmar fully understanding and sharing the sentimental values left by the families of the servicemen who sacrificed their lives in Myanmar provided assistance and searched for the wreckage at possible areas in the Kachin State (northern part of Myanmar) and found debris and remains of the C-47 aircraft of USAF and its crew deep in the jungle there on July of 1991. The Government of Myanmar brought to Yangon all the debris of the aircraft and the mortal remains of the crew together with their dog tags which identify them as James B. Heise, Bob D. Torbert and F.P. Reynolds Jr., U.S. Army Air Corps. The then Myanmar Minister for Foreign Affairs invited the then U.S. Charge d' Affairs Mr. Franklin P. Huddle on September 1991 to inform him of the discovery and handed over to him photographs recorded of the wreckage.

The discovery of the crashed USAF C-47 wreckage was informed not only to the U.S Embassy in Yangon but also to the American Veterans who came to Myanmar to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup>

World War. Regretfully, as this discovery was left unattended without any response from the U. S Government, in November 1996 the Government of Myanmar again reminded a visiting U.S. Senator to Myanmar of the debris and the remains which are still to be transferred to the U.S. authorities concerned.

In December of 1996, after (5) years since the offer was first made the remains of the USAF C-47 crew finally were accepted by the U.S Embassy in Yangon and were handed over to the U.S officials in a ceremony held by the Myanmar authorities honouring the 3 dead servicemen.

According to the report from the March 25, 1966 Houston Chronicle the wife of one of the dead pilot is still alive and living in the United States. The paper stated: "All she knew was that he had disappeared while flying on a World War II mission over Burma and must be dead.... His wife received notice he was missing in action. Then months passed with no further news. In frustration she went to Washington hoping to learn more by landing a job with the government office that handled the missing-in-action records. She said that plan did not work because officials figured out what she was up to." Nevertheless, she added: " It gave me a great sense of relief to know that his plane had been found."

This return of the remains will definitely assist the bereaved families of the airmen to find some closure for their lost loved ones. But it is very disheartening to know that the U.S. went to a great deal in a certain country on the Missing In Action (MIA) issue while in Myanmar this issue was happened to go unnoticed and ignored for five years.

## ***22. Myanmar The Weak Link In The Regional China Containment Policy ( Is The Unipolar World A Threat To World Peace ? )***

In the murky world of internally competing government interest groups, particularly in the U.S., there is a strong lobby for containing China, as China is not only a potential superpower but also already a major world military power, rapidly transforming itself into a global economic power. It has become a necessity for U.S. and other western governments to realize this containment policy after the effective demise of Communism in Russia and of the superpower rivalry of the cold-war days. There are several sets of operating conditions either in the economic sector or in

the geo-political sphere but in realizing such a policy, one of the approaches to this problem is to influence China's immediate geographical neighbours in taking a more pro-western stance.

Therefore, from the western point of view, Myanmar could be deemed to be the weak link in the regional China containment policy as primarily advocated by the United States. Their attempt to turn Myanmar into a satellite state of the West by their blatant interference in Myanmar's internal affairs under the much abused and misused pretext of human rights and democracy is quite obvious. It is now widely believed that more pragmatic western analysts are coming to realize that the policies implemented by their respective governments concerning Myanmar are nowhere near in achieving their desired goals and thereby changes in policy formation and implementation are evidently necessary. It is also becoming more obvious that even in the west, especially in the United States, strategic planners and farsighted statesmen have naturally come to realize that Myanmar affairs have been overplayed creating an overcharged spin where vested interest groups and vote hungry individual politicians have now taken over much of the control. Their superficial, unrealistic, irresponsible and more often cynically voter-oriented views are largely counterproductive and are delaying Myanmar's peaceful transition to a sustainable democracy.

In spite of the constant negative attitude and reports from some Western Governments, Myanmar has undeniably managed to transform itself into one of the most peaceful and stable nations in the world today from, not so long ago, a war torn country. It is in the interests of all the people of Myanmar to maintain the currently existing peace, stability and national unity the nation is enjoying and at the same time to realistically and responsibly lay the foundation for a democratic system best suited to Myanmar's culture and national security. Unfortunately, there are some observers, both inside and outside the country, who are demanding immediate changes. Realistically, new democracies do not automatically succeed. In fact, many fail. They fail when they are built on fragile foundations and unrealistic expectations. But they thrive when they are built on a solid economic base, when the societies are stable, when national security is assured and when there is a constitution suited to the culture and needs of a country. That is why Myanmar views with great concern the interests of those who are blatantly interfering in Myanmar's internal affairs.

If their actions of vested interests become successful, Myanmar will not only be once again turned into a nation of warring ethnic groups and proxy war but the entire region will also suffer the consequences of its destabilization.

Nevertheless, for small and developing countries like Myanmar, it does not have much interest in the containment strategy of the big powers. But the economic, military and political power-balance in totality among the big powers are deemed necessary to maintain a peaceful and stable world. The recent events that took place in Kosovo have become a classic example and the trend of the fate of small nations in the unipolar world when the big and the powerful nations, if not perforce contained and balanced, can become a threat and a thorn to world peace.

Myanmar is one of the small and developing nations in the world that desires to live in total peace and stability among the nations of the world where the U.N. Charter is respected, honored and implemented by all members without exception. It is also the sole desire of all the small and developing nations in the world not to have the U.N. Charter manipulated and exploited as a tool and a leverage to pressure and force smaller nations in the service of those manipulators' interests, obviously leading towards a breakdown of international law.

### ***23. A Set Back For The Region To Become An Economic Power***

An unstable Myanmar with an internal revolution will definitely not serve the interests of the region. If Myanmar's economy collapses or the country becomes unstable, the entire region will suffer the consequences. Her instability in the region could jeopardize and create a setback for ASEAN which has already set the aim of becoming an economic power the coming 21st century.

The vision and wisdom of the ASEAN leaders and their relentless efforts towards safeguarding the political, security and economic interests of the region are to be highly commended. Expanding the membership to embrace all 10 countries of South East Asia is a very positive and farsighted decision they have taken. Their deep understanding of the problems and above all, their determination to solve regional matters peacefully in a collective manner have already created an unprecedented atmosphere of goodwill, friendship and cooperation among the member countries.

## ***24. Myanmar In Evolution***

Myanmar is abundant in natural resources and also has a sizeable educated manpower. Today, the Government of Myanmar has successfully dislodged the buffers and has transformed the country into a friendship bridge networking South Asia, South East Asia and China. In fact, she has joined ASEAN as well as BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation). It is just the beginning of her dream to be able to meet her commitments and obligations in creating conditions necessary to support the region's aim to become a peaceful, prosperous and economic power in the coming century.

Myanmar is now going through an evolution but there are some who want to turn it into a revolution. She is holding on to her hard-won peace and stability just like ASEAN are holding on to theirs. *“Peace may not be everything--but without peace, everything is nothing.”*

## ***25. Why The Change From State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC) To State Peace & Development Council (SPDC)***

The change itself indicates that the military government regards itself as a transitional or a caretaker government exacting a step-by-step transformation to the democracy it cherishes for the entire nation. If the military government intends to hold on to the power as has been accused of by the western governments, changes to the name of the government or members of its administration are not necessary. It is a change of substance, entity and identity.

The military government is systematically moving towards her main objective of a modernized, well-developed and peaceful nation within a consolidated union and supportive economic infrastructure. To reach her ultimate goal, Myanmar intends to move phase by phase. The first phase during the SLORC administration in 1988 was to restore and establish Law and Order in the country, with a view to national reconciliation, stability, tranquillity and to initiate the transformation to a multi-party democratic system with a market-oriented economy from a socialist one-party system and a centralized economy. Now, in phase two the SPDC will strengthen and reinforce the maintenance of peace and stability while reinvigorating all-round development in the country. Myanmar is also very much interested

in meeting her commitments to become as developed as the senior ASEAN countries. With this in mind she intends to give high priority to the promotion of her economic sector. Myanmar also believes that in order to become a functioning and disciplined democracy in the near future, she will first have to create a strong infrastructure for economic and security enabling the emergence of a middle class. This is one of the main reasons for her priority in the development of her economic sector in this second phase. Simultaneously, in the process of spearheading the peace and development initiatives as the name implies, the drafting of the new constitution will also be completed and elections will take place in the next phase.

Unfortunately, we have been inescapably stuck in the first phase much longer than we initially had expected, due to unnecessary pressures and problems created from within the country and abroad. The economic sanctions and embargoes imposed on Myanmar by the western countries are like putting obstacles and hurdles in our path to democracy. Ironically, these are the same western nations that are criticizing Myanmar for not being a democracy. The essence of the change is nothing but a systematic step-by-step process in meeting her preparedness for the transition to a disciplined and functioning democracy.

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**Composition of the Different Ethnic Groups under the 8 Major  
National Ethnic Races in Myanmar**

- (A) Kachin comprises (12) different ethnic groups.
  - (1) Kachin
  - (2) Trone
  - (3) Dalaung
  - (4) Jinghpaw
  - (5) Guari
  - (6) Hkahku
  - (7) Duleng
  - (8) Maru ( Lawgore)
  - (9) Rawang
  - (10) Lashi ( La Chit)
  - (11) Atsi
  - (12) Lisu
- (B) Kayah comprises (9) different ethnic groups.
  - (13) Kayah
  - (14) Zayein
  - (15) Ka-Yun ( Padaung)
  - (16) Gheko
  - (17) Kebar
  - (18) Bre ( Ka-Yaw)
  - (19) Manu Manaw
  - (20) Yin Talai
  - (21) Yin Baw
- (C) Kayin comprises (11) different ethnic groups.
  - (22) Kayin
  - (23) Kayinpyu
  - (24) Pa-Le-Chi
  - (25) Mon Kayin ( Sarpyu)
  - (26) Sgaw
  - (27) Ta-Lay-Pwa
  - (28) Paku
  - (29) Bwe
  - (30) Monnepwa
  - (31) Monpwa
  - (32) Shu (Pwo)

- (D) Chin comprises (53) different ethnic groups.
- (33) Chin
  - (34) Meithei (Kathe)
  - (35) Saline
  - (36) Ka-Lin-Kaw (Lushay)
  - (37) Khami
  - (38) Awa Khami
  - (39) Khawno
  - (40) Kaungso
  - (41) Kaung Saing Chin
  - (42) Kwelshin
  - (43) Kwangli (Sim)
  - (44) Gunte (Lyente)
  - (45) Gwete
  - (46) Ngorn
  - (47) Zizan
  - (48) Sentang
  - (49) Saing Zan
  - (50) Za-How
  - (51) Zotung
  - (52) Z0-Pe
  - (53) Zo
  - (54) Zahnyet (Zanniet)
  - (55) Tapong
  - (56) Tiddim (Hai-Dim)
  - (57) Tay-Zan
  - (58) Taishon
  - (59) Thado
  - (60) Torr
  - (61) Dim
  - (62) Dai (Yindu)
  - (63) Naga
  - (64) Tanghkul
  - (65) Malin
  - (66) Panun
  - (67) Magun
  - (68) Matu

- (69) Miram (Mara)
- (70) Mi-er
- (71) Mgan
- (72) Lushei (Lushay)
- (73) Laymyo
- (74) Lyente
- (75) Lawhtu
- (76) Lai
- (77) Laizao
- (78) Wakim (Mro)
- (79) Haulngo (Mro)
- (80) Anu
- (81) Anun
- (82) Oo-Pu
- (83) Lhinbu
- (84) Asho (Plain)
- (85) Rongtu
- (E) Bamar comprises (9) different ethnic groups.
  - (86) Bamar
  - (87) Dawei
  - (88) Beik
  - (89) Yaw
  - (90) Yabein
  - (91) Kadu
  - (92) Ganan
  - (93) Salon
  - (94) Hpon
- (F) Mon comprises (1) different ethnic groups.
  - (95) Mon
- (G) Rakhine comprises (7) different ethnic groups.
  - (96) Rakhine
  - (97) Kamein
  - (98) Kwe Myi
  - (99) Daingnet
  - (100) Maramagyi
  - (101) Mro
  - (102) Thet

(H) Shan comprises (33) different ethnic groups.

- (103) Shan
- (104) Yun (Lao)
- (105) Kwi
- (106) Pyin
- (107) Yao
- (108) Danaw
- (109) Pale
- (110) En
- (111) Son
- (112) Khamu
- (113) Kaw (Akha-E-Kaw)
- (114) Kokang
- (115) Khamti Shan
- (116) Hkun
- (117) Taungyo
- (118) Danu
- (119) Palaung
- (120) Man Zi
- (121) Yin Kya
- (122) Yin Net
- (123) Shan Gale
- (124) Shan Gyi
- (125) Lahu
- (126) Intha
- (127) Eik-swair
- (128) Pa-O
- (129) Tai-Loi
- (130) Tai-Lem
- (131) Tai-Lon
- (132) Tai-Lay
- (133) Maingtha
- (134) Maw Shan
- (135) Wa

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