

**THE INTERNAL CHESS GAME IN RANGOON AND THE  
PAKISTAN-INDIA-CHINA TANGO**

**Below is a news item from MIZZAMA NEWS GROUP, containing excerpts from interviews with two top Indian analysts specializing on Burma-India relation.**

**The interviews are most insightful via-a-vis Indian policy towards Burma or, to put it more correctly, the military junta – which, incidentally, does not represent the people of Burma, and therefore cannot represent Burma.**

**India's Burma policy can, at best, be described as "fingers crossed, hoping for the best" policy. Some might say it is extremely wishy-washy.**

**India, it is claimed by the interviewees, knows that the junta is hand-in-glove with India's enemy – Pakistan and China – and is engaged in, among other things, supplying arms to rebel groups in Northeast India. India's strategic response therefore is to cozy up to the junta in the hope that somehow the junta will cease and desist from doing what it has, as alleged, been doing all along: subverting India security and sovereignty.**

**What is interesting about General Khin Nyunt's visit to Pakistan is that this trip follows General Maung Aye's and Tin U's visit to China. China has until then been Khin Nyunt's turf. And India has been Maung Aye's turf. It therefore might make some sense to see Khin Nyunt's Pakistan visit as having more to do with the junta's internal chess game, than with weighty political-strategic considerations.**

**Khin Nyunt has been losing ground to Maung Aye and his faction, beginning from the siege on the Burmese Embassy in Bangkok by a band of anti-junta Burmese activists linked to the Karen mystic God's Army. The siege was a slap in the face for Khin Nyunt and his military intelligence (MI) camp, and most likely emboldened Maung Aye to launch his power-play to dislodge Khin Nyunt and the MI camp.**

Following the embassy siege, Khin Nyunt's appointees on the trade and economic committees were replaced by Maung Aye's men. And in addition to dealing with the Chinese (thereby poaching on Khin Nyunt's turf), Maung Aye has been busy touring Shan State. He has been active in forming up new militia units to counter the influence of the ceasefire armies, in particular the Wa army, which have had very close relation with Khin Nyunt and his MI camp.

On the surface, it does seem that Khin Nyunt and the MI camp are losing the internal chess-game. With General Than Shwe reportedly in bad health, the "buffer" factor – the stabilizing wheel -- in the politics of military factions is in danger of disappearing.

And the power-play launched by Maung Aye and his faction against Khin Nyunt seems to indicate that the "Old Man" – General Ne Wn – has become irrelevant owing, probably, to rapid physical decline. It might in this regard be noted that there were rumours of Ne Win's death in early April of this year.

The battle in Rangoon's inner circle among the ruling generals is intriguing in that it is, among others, a war between those with brawn and not much brains, and elements that possess a lot of brain and craftiness but not much brawn.

As intriguing would be the reaction or response of the opposition forces, especially Daw Aung San Suukyi, to the military's internal chess game and Maung Aye's power-play.

Will she cheer for Maung Aye and faction on the assumption that he will, as a simple soldier, be easier to deal with than the crafty Khin Nyunt? It is reported that Khin Nyunt is not popular with the NLD (National League for Democracy) crowd, especially with former generals like Tin Oo and Aung Shwe, who have blamed the MI for their fall from grace with General Ne Win many years ago.

Although it is likely that the NLD might favor Maung Aye, the question is whether Maung Aye looks upon the NLD and the opposition with a kinder eye. It might be that having displaced Khin Nyunt and the MI camp, Maung Aye might emerge as the new Number One, thus restoring the military's political cohesion, and thereby ensuring the junta's life for a few more decades.

It does seem for now that the crisis of leadership which has been troubling the military, and weakening its political cohesion, is about to be resolved. The likely winner and the new Number One, it appears at this point in time, is Maung Aye. It remains to be seen whether "a simple soldier" will be

**easier to deal with, as hoped for or expected by some opposition element, than the crafty and rather sophisticated Khin Nyunt.**

**Vanc-X26  
Analytica Birmanie  
July 2000**



A POSTING FROM MIZZIMA NEWS GOUP ([www.mizzima.com](http://www.mizzima.com))

ITEM [1]

Khin Nyunt's visit to Pakistan, a concern for policy makers in Delhi (Part I)

New Delhi, July 6, 2000 -- While Indian Army Chief V.P Malik is on an official visit in Rangoon, Burma's intelligence chief and Secretary No. (1) of ruling SPDC Lt. General Khin Nyunt is out in Pakistan, an arch rival of India. Pakistan is known to be supplying arms and ammunition to Burma junta for quite some years and there is a strong link between the intelligence agencies of two countries. Lt. General Khin Nyunt is the highest-ranking Burmese junta official to visit Pakistan since 1974.

Though Indian government does not make any public response on the visit (in fact, there is almost no news on Khin Nyunt's visit to Pakistan in the Indian media), policy makers in New Delhi are definitely watching closely on the visit of Burmese delegation to Pakistan. But the visit and continuing close ties between Burma and Pakistan will not have any immediate shift on India's policy towards Burma i.e. to establish a "working relationship" with the military junta in power.

The following is excerpts from an interview with Dr. Swaran Singh, research fellow at New Delhi-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). The second part of this will be interview with Mr. Brahma Chellaney who is professor of security studies at Centre for Policy Research (CPR) in New Delhi.

Excerpts from interview with Dr. Swaran Singh

Q: Currently, Burma's Lt. General Khin Nyunt is in Pakistan and India's Army Chief is in Burma. What is your view on this India-Burma-Pakistan triangle relationships?

A: As we know a military delegation from Burma is right now in Pakistan and this is part of the relationship, which has evolved, in last few years. In fact, both India and Pakistan and many other countries have a sort of got into engaged in Burma in last five or six years. And broadly, this relationship between Pakistan and Burma on the one hand and India and Burma on the other should be seen in that context that Burma has opened up and outside countries have gradually started building relations. And the only difference which should be understood in this context of comparing India relationship with Burma and Pakistan's relationship with Burma is that Pakistan's relationship with Burma has been very military-oriented. Partly because of the military culture or political culture of Pakistan that the kind of relationship has evolved much around military relationship and military ties between these two countries. We also had earlier known that they were building an air base for Burma and they also supplied equipment to Burma.

In the case of India, we have not been a sort of engaged in that kind of relationship. We have not involved in supplying weapons to them or building any that sort of military facilities. India's relationship with Burma has concentrated more on trade and other kinds of political relationship which involves official exchanges and all other variety of things that can happen between these

two countries. Border management I think is one major issue for us too. So, I think that is a major difference when you look at India and Pakistan both separately approaching Burmese authorities. Indian military chief General Malik is now in Rangoon and he has signed some more agreements on border management and perhaps some other issues that in fact further enforces the fact that Indian relationship is much more broad-based, and much more holistic. It is not focused so much more on supplying military equipment or any sort of helping military junta in building military there. Pakistani relationship will be again known now once this delegation has completed deliberations in Pakistan and we will come to know as to what Khin Nyunt and his other members of delegation are going to focus on while during the visit in Pakistan. But I assume again things that the main focus will be how to help military junta in sustaining itself first and for that they obviously need equipment for military weapons and other things.

Q: Ministry of External Affairs was quite tight-lipped on this Burmese visit to Pakistan. What could be the position of India on Khin Nyunt's visit?

A: The visit led by Khin Nyunt is definitely going to be a matter of concern for New Delhi policy makers especially because we know earlier instances where Khin Nyunt is clearly the man who established Burma relationships with China and the kind of relationship with China shared with Burma was nearly that of making Burma as another province of China. It was very military-oriented again. I am sure Khin Nyunt being in Pakistan with strong delegation of 20 people is definitely a matter of concern here. People are watching carefully and want to know what is going to happen during this deliberation, especially as I said earlier because relationship is military oriented that definitely means that India must keep its eyes and ears very clearly open and notice what is happening in neighborhood. Burma is a very important country for India especially because India has been trying to open up and build relationship with bigger areas of South East Asia and what happens in Burma is definitely a major concern for us.

Q: What could be the position of India if it has to choose between Lt. General Khin Nyunt and General Maung Aye who are the two supposedly strong contenders for the post of SPDC chairman in future?

A: It is of course known clearly that Khin Nyunt was actually military intelligence chief and he has been known to having a tremendous hold on how the things operate in Burma and has generally been known responsible for all sorts things that happened over last decade. General Maung Aye by comparison is a sort of known as low-profile person by comparison and he is also not as "notorious" if one could use that word. It definitely is important for India to see a person who should be an easier person to deal with.

But in fact to start with to deal with military was a big question for us. You know, we spent long long years to think whether we should deal with the military junta or shouldn't. I think this is only another question of its similar nature for us that in case Khin Nyunt comes to hold that important chair, after General Than Shwe retires, India should find itself in relatively difficult position in that case than dealing with Maung Aye.

Q: What do you think on the view of China fostering relationship between Burma and Pakistan?

A: I am sure during early 1990s, there was a lot of discussions and reporting on what was called "encirclement" of India and a lot of people did mention how China was building relationships with Burma on the one hand and the Pakistan on the other. If this kind of relationship is beginning to strengthen itself, I think this make it some sort of triangle which can work against India's interest in future. So Burma and Pakistan are building relationship especially of military nature and China already has relations of military nature of both Pakistan and Burma. Definitely this emerges as certain amount of strategic triangle which can be sort of someway impinging on India's national interests in future at some date. But definitely as yet, this third leg of the triangle seems not so strong.

Q: Do you expect any shift, if there is any on Burma, in India's foreign policy towards Burma, because of growing ties between Burma and Pakistan?

A: I think India's foreign policy is not sort of expected to take any major shift in future when it comes to Burma. What has happened is that we have accepted the international trend and

started opening relationship with the military regime there partly because they have stayed there for last ten years and because everyone else is being to deal with them. But we have also kept our options clearly open and we have continued large section of Indian decision-makers and public at large have continued to support democracy movement in Burma. So the option is always open for us. But let me say that India does not have to get too much worried about these each time meetings taken place like this. In last five to six months, if you observe India has clearly been seen internationally as a very responsible country and the country, which has to be reckoned with when you talk of South Asia. So India's views and India's policy will definitely make its own influence in international decision-making various forums. India ultimately supports democracy. We are a democracy and we support democracy in both Burma and Pakistan. So that remains the bottom line in our case though it has a transitory as a sort of small transition period when we have to deal with the military.

////////////////////

#### ITEM [2]

Khin Nyunt's visit to Pakistan, a concern for policy makers in Delhi  
(Part II)

New Delhi, July 6, 2000 -- Some policy makers in India view that China is actually behind the close intelligence ties between Pakistan and Burma as a part of its policy of containing India from outside. In fact, it is an embarrassment for Indian Army Chief V. P Malik that while he is visiting Burma, Burmese intelligence chief is in Pakistan fostering closer bilateral ties. But still, General Malik certainly would like to deal with the military rulers in Burma to revive the counter insurgency operations in North East of India and would seek more assistance from the junta to flush out Indian insurgents from Burmese side.

The following is excerpts from interview with Mr. Brahma Chellaney, professor of security studies at Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

Q: How do you see the close ties between Burma and Pakistan?

A: In the first place, the nexus that we have between China, Burma and Pakistan has been operationed for quite some time. China has been using both Pakistan and Burma as surrogates to contain India from two different flanks and the Pakistani used by China has been a known case but in recent years Burma has also emerged as an important strategic flank of China to contain India from the eastern side. And in that context, the Burmese intelligence chief's current visit to Pakistan when the Indian Army Chief is actually on an official visit tour in Burma is reflective of the strong intelligence links that are being fostered by China between its surrogates, in this case between Burma and Pakistan. Since these two countries are being employed for a larger strategic objective by China, China has been encouraging both Pakistan and Burma to establish better strategic rapport and the Burmese intelligence current chief to visit to Pakistan is part of the exercise to build a better rapport. And I think from the Indian perspective that the Burmese intelligence chief's visit is an enormous sign that not only do we have strong China-Pakistan, China-Burma links as well as covert actions but we also have seen Pakistan-Burma covert links of various kinds emerging.

Q: What about Pakistan supplying arms to Burma junta and the ties of two intelligence agencies?

A: The Pakistani intelligence service called ISI has been operating out of Kathmandu, Dhaka and Burma against Indian interest. ISI is using these three places as staging grounds for operations in India. Especially Burma is very useful for operations in North East of India. And Burma and Bangladesh between themselves have become very attractive staging grounds for ISI to send arms and ammunition and militants into Northeast India. So these links that we are now seeing, the growing links between intelligence services of Pakistan and Burma are part and parcel of the ISI's penetration into the Burmese leadership structure and it's influence largely because of China. China has played the role in ensuring that Pakistani intelligence operatives are welcomed in Burma or if they are not welcomed, they are at least allowed to operate out of

Burmese territory and many of these operatives according to information we have in New Delhi have been operating very close to the border with India. And their main purpose is to fuel insurgency in India: Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and they also have been operating in other parts of North East India like Tripura and Mizoram and they also eyeing Arunachal Pradesh for example. And all these linkages between the Burmese and Pakistanis intelligence, the growing role of Pakistanis' intelligence operatives in Burma, the way the Pakistani's operatives are expanding their base of operations in Burma. Plus China's encouragement of such activities against India are all important signals for India that China is doing to India what is complaining the United States is doing to China, which is "containment". The Chinese complained so loudly that America currently use engaged in its strategy to contain China from outside. But the Chinese have been ruthless practitioner of power politics and they have been containing India from outside. And they have been doing it almost ruthlessly. So this use of Burma and Pakistan is an important on fact the central relevant of China containment strategy against India.

Q: Indian army Chief General Malik is in Burma for the second time in six months. How do you look at his visit in Burma while Khin Nyunt is in Pakistan?

A: I am sure it is an embarrassment for General Malik that while he is visiting Burma, the Burmese intelligence chief is actually in Pakistan. I don't think he had any inkling that this would happen while he was in Burma. But the visit of Gen. Malik is part of an excise by India to mend fences with Burma's military junta. For many years, India was actually taking very hard-line position against the Burmese military rulers. In fact, even the United States and Western Europe were actually doing business with the military junta in Burma, but India had you know said "we will have no business with military leadership there". But, as the military has consolidated its hold on Burma that becomes increasingly clear to India that such a policy of seeking to promote democracy in Burma is a policy which carries only negative returns for India. Because while India was preaching democracy to Burma, China not only managed to gain strategic space in Burma, it in fact set up various kinds of strategic facilities in Burma that are specifically aimed at India. For example, these listening posts at the Coco Islands are designed to eavesdrop on India. And Chinese are also being quite interested in building naval facilities along the shores of Burma. So an effort has been made on the part of India to build a working relationship with the military junta in Yangon and not have this kind of very hard line pro-democracy stand, you know, that all the matters that Aung San Suu Kyi that there is more to Burma than just a democracy movement while India's interests are definitely with the democratic forces. Because if you look at India, all the regimes around India that are undemocratic, that are authoritarian or totalitarian, happen to be engaging in roguish conduct. They engage in various campaigns of terrors. They are breaching international laws through covert actions and through other means. So, undemocratic regimes in India's neighborhood are all very hostile to India. It is Talibans in the Afghanistan, it is Musharraf's military junta in Pakistan and we have China, which is our largest neighbor, a big communist power and you have military in Burma. So this arch of undemocratic states around India is most inimical to India's interest. So India would certainly like to see democratic forces in Burma triumphed. But until they do triumphed, it makes sense for India to establish a working relationship with Burma so that Burma does not go by default in China's lap.

Q: What about the counter insurgency operations between Burma and India?

A: Counter insurgency operations done jointly with Burmese security forces definitely are an attractive proposition for India. And some joint counter insurgency operations have been done in the past. One major exercise (Operation Golden Bird) was done, then it was halted because Aung San Suu Kyi was given the Nehru International Award for Peace by India. At around time, the operation was actually then halted. General Malik would certainly like to revive counter insurgency operations with Burma. Because the ISI is actually helping militants who are on the Burmese side to intrude into India and to send arms and ammunition across to rebels in India. So, if security forces of Burma cooperate with para-military and army troops of India, it will be easier to flush out insurgents from the hide-outs in the jungle along the India-Burma border. So certainly that is an important objective that India seeks. But that is a very narrow term objective. In the longer frame of things, India would like to develop much closer relationship with its neighbors and certainly it is very keen to develop better relation with countries towards "East". It's just not

Burma, it is the whole of South East Asia and Japan that India is looking at these days just the way China has been containing India from outside. The only way to counter China is to have good relations with China's major neighbors and Burma is one important neighbor of China. It may not be powerful neighbor but it is an important neighbour that China has been using as a staging ground for working against India's interest. So in that sense, I think the Indians on balance believe that while they should be supportive of democracy forces in Burma, yet it makes sense to have a good relationship with the military junta and not be seen as being inimical to the interests of the military in Burma.

Q: So, you don't think there will be any change in India's Burma policy because of Pakistan-Burma relationship.

A: India's policy tends to be one of caution. So India will be watching this new intelligence networking that is going on currently, but it is not going to respond publicly to this development. I think the Indians trend to be very cautious in relation to events relating both to Burma and China. Any kind of public reaction by India might give offence to military junta in Burma and also suggest that India is taking side in this power fute between the two powerful generals that is going on at the moment.

---