

# **The Panlong Agreement and the Birth of the Union States**

## **Khin Maung Saw**

### **1. Introduction**

The agreement between Gen. Aung San, the leader of “Burma Proper”, and his counterparts of “the Frontier Hill Regions of Burma” was signed on 12th February 1947 at Panlong and therefore that agreement was known as the Panlong Agreement. Many people believe that the Panlong Agreement is the foundation stone of the Union of Burma, however, some people argue that the treaty is not the basis of the genuine Union because the representatives of some major ethnic groups were neither invited to that conference nor they signed in that agreement.

In this paper the present author will try to find out whether these complaints will meet all available authentic historical facts or not and will carefully scrutinize the roots of the evolution of these complaints.

### **2. Three Anglo-Burmese Wars**

The first Anglo-Burmese war broke out in 1824 and according to the Yandabo Treaty signed in 1826, Burma had to accept an agreement giving up her influences in Assam and Manipur and had to agree to surrender the Arakan (Rakhine) and Tenissarim (Taninthayi) provinces to the British. After the second Anglo-Burmese war which broke out without any declaration of war in 1852 and ended without a peace treaty, the British declared one-sidedly that Lower Burma below the latitude line crossing the town Thayet became British territory. The last war in November 1885 also broke out without any declaration of war, but the British captured King Thibaw, the last king of the Konbaung Dynasty, Chief Queen Suphaya Latt and Minor Queen Suphaya Lay. They banished the Burmese Royal Family to exile at Ratanagiri near Bombay and proclaimed that entire Burma became a British Colony starting from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1886.

#### **2.1 Early Colonial Era**

King Thibaw died of a broken heart in Ratana Giri near Bombay because his eldest daughter became pregnant by his Indian butler and she became a concubine of this butler. Minor Queen Suphaya Lay died ahead of Thibaw. Till now, the tombs of King Thibaw and Minor Queen Suphaya Lay can be seen in Ratana Giri. After the death of King Thibaw the Chief Queen, Suphaya Latt, was allowed to return to Burma, however, she was not allowed to go back to their former Royal Residence City, Mandalay, but to stay in the new capital Rangoon until her dying day.

Three years ago, when Burmese President Thein Sein made a state visit to India he met some descendants of Thibaw's eldest daughter living poorly in India. He pitied them and gave 1000 US \$ as donation. Many people believe, King Thibaw and his family had to reap the consequences of the past misdeeds of their ancestors, on what they did to the kingdoms of Mons, Ayuddiya and Arakan (Rakhine).

##### **2.1.1. Was the Burmese pride crushed?**

The answer should be, no doubt, “Yes”. The present author has to point out that the Burmese used to have their own empire until they confronted with the British in 1824 which

led the downfall of the Burmese Empire and eventually Burma became a British colony. At the beginning the British administered Burma only as a province of the British-Indian Empire until 1937. Hence, it cannot be ruled out that the British policy at the beginning was to crush the pride of the Burmese.

Here, I would like to cite Dr. Htin Aung who was a descendant of a Burmese aristocrat family and the former rector of the University of Rangoon who became Burmese ambassador to Ceylon in 1959, wrote: (*After the British conquest of Upper Burma*), “*Lord Dufferin, finally decided to annex the territory altogether and, with a view to further humiliate the Burmese people, declared the whole country to be a mere province of the Indian empire. He probably hoped that the Burmese would lose their separate racial identity under the flood of Indian immigrants*”. (See details: Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 266).

Apart from that, the British brought hundreds of thousands of Indians to Burma and some of those Indians behaved as if Burma were their sub-colony and looked down upon Burmese. Till now, there are still some social and racial tensions between the Burmese and the descendants of those Indians.

### **2.1.2 British-Burma**

Starting from 1886, British-Burma was ruled by a Chief Commissioner. Later from 1897 to 1922 the British Government 'promoted' the administration and Burma was ruled by a Lieutenant Governor. Once, during a public speech, the reverend Arakanese monk U Ottama demanded the Lieutenant Governor Sir Reginal H. Craddock openly “*Craddock, Get out (from Burma)!*”. Nobody knew whether it was a coincident or not, but Sir Reginal H. Craddock who ruled Burma from 1918 to 1922 really became the last Lieutenant Governor of Burma. Starting from 1923 until the Burmese Independence (except the Japanese occupation era) Burma was ruled by a British Governor.

### **2.1.3 The Dyarchy or Dual Government Reforms**

The British government decided to grant to the Burmese the diarchy or dual government in 1923, which had been given to India. Burma was divided into 'Burma Proper' and “Frontier Hill Regions”. Under 'Burma Proper' there were Arakan Division, Sagaing Division (including Naga Hills), Mandalay Division, Magwe Division, Irrawaddy Division, Pegu Division and Tenissarim Division (which became Karen State, Mon State and Tenissarim Division nowadays). Chin Hills, Kachin Hills (Putao District nowadays), Shan Plateau ruled by 33 feudal lords and Karenni states ruled by 4 feudal lords belonged to the Frontier Hill Regions. These Frontier Hill Regions were directly administered by the British governor. The British government gave their own reason that the people in those regions were politically not advanced and must be kept under the direct control of the British governor.

“Burma Proper” had a “parliament” called legislative council with 106 members in which 58 Burmese members and 24 members from the “minorities” were elected from their constituencies. Other 24 members were directly appointed by the governor. Regardless of their past history and they used to have separate kingdoms, Arakanese (Rakhaings) and Mons were considered to be Burmese because of their faith (Buddhism). Indians, Anglo-Indians, and the Karens were named as the minorities living in “Burma Proper”. Apparently, “Burma Proper” was politically advanced than “Frontier Hill Regions”, however, since the British governor had a veto power to reject all decisions from the legislative council, many Burmese felt that it was too late and too little. Apart from that, this reform

was in fact a “Divide and Rule Policy”.

Here, I would like to cite Dr. Htin Aung who wrote: *“The British has forced King Mindon to recognize the independence of the Karenni states, which had always been part of Burma, but after the fall of the Burmese kingdom they promptly turned the Karenni states into the British territory but kept them entirely separate from Burma. Now they were separating the hill regions of the Chins and the Kachins, and the plateau of the Shans entirely from the rest of Burma, on the excuse that the people in those regions were politically not advanced and must be kept under the direct control of the British governor of Burma, and they declared that the affairs of those regions were not discussable by the legislature that was to be established under the diarchy reforms. In addition, they divided the people in the plain into racial groups, namely Burmese, Indians, Anglo-Indians, and the Karens, on the excuse that racial minorities were entitled to special protection by the British government. Anglo-Indians included Anglo-Burmese, whose number was small because intermarriage between the British and the Burmese was not common. The total population of Anglo-Indians themselves was small and the majority of them had come from India; except that they wore trousers and coats and had English names, they were really Indians and could have been classified as such. As to the Karens, in spite of exaggerated claims by the Christian missionaries, at least 85 per cent were non-Christians, and thus the sake of a small Christian minority the idea of racial division was introduced”.* (See details: Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 285-86).

The present author shares Dr. Htin Aung's view, however, wants to add the following points he either forgot to mention or he, as a descendant of a Burmese aristocrat family, did not care.

During the era of the Burmese kings, though there were some minority problems too, these were not as big as after the post-colonial era. Most, but not all, princes and chieftains of the minorities had no objection to become the subject of the Burmese kings. The only two ethnic groups who were not subjected to the Burmese kings until the middle and at the end of the 18th century were the Mons and the Arakanese (Rakhaings) because they used to have their own kingdoms. When the British occupied Burma they totally ignored the rights of the Mons and the Arakanese (Rakhaings). Nor did they take into consideration that these two peoples used to have their own kingdoms. Ironically, Mon and Arakanese territories were administered under "Burma Proper", that means they put Mons and Arakanese (Rakhaings) under the category of the Burmese because all Mons and all Rakhaings (Arakanese) are Buddhists, hence, they were neither considered as racial minorities nor were they entitled to special protection by the British government. The Karens, on the other hand, at least 65 per cent were non-Christians and at least 40% were Buddhists, however, for the sake of a small Christian minority the idea of racial division was introduced!! In the same way, other territories ruled by princes and chieftains, who were subjected to the Burmese kings were put under the Frontier Areas of Burma and not under Burma Proper. The Shans and the Karennis are also Buddhists, however their territories were administered under the Frontier Areas of Burma and not under “Burma Proper.”

## **2.2 Separation and anti-Separation Movements**

In 1927, The Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as the "Simon Commission", was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon. This Commission gave its opinion that Burma should be separated from India immediately. In this situation, Indians

living in Burma opposed the separation. Many rich Indians living in Burma helped financially to the anti-separation movement. However, Sir Charles Innes, the Governor of Burma (1927 – 32) reported: *“Almost every educated Burman was in favour of separation, and regarded it as inevitable. The only difference of of opinions (between separationists and anti-separationists) was whether there should be immediate separation or whether it should be postponed to the later date. ... The anti-separationists thought that Burma would get full self-government quicker than she could expect to achieve it independently of India. Only after the achievement of self-government, Burma should be separated from India”*.

At first, The All India Congress condemned the report of the British Governor of Burma and accused him of planning the forced separation of Burma from India.

Then, anti-Indian feelings became very strong in Burma. Only after the Indo-Burmese Riot in 1930, The All India Congress noticed the real situation in Burma and made a new statement in March 1931: *“The congress recognises the right of the people of Burma to claim separation from India and to establish an independent Burma State or to remain an autonomous partner in a free India with a right of separation at any time they may desire to exercise it”*

### **2.2.1 Crown Colony Burma**

In 1937, Burma was separated from British-India and became a crown colony. The British authorities, however, safeguarded Indian rights in Burma, with the following words: *“No subject of His Majesty domiciled in Burma shall on grounds only of religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them, be ineligible for office under the Crown in Burma, or be prohibited by any law of Burma on any such grounds from acquiring, holding, or disposing of property of carrying on any occupation, trade, business, or profession in Burma”*.

Ceylon, Malaya and Hongkong were the other British crown colonies in Asia.

### **2.2.2. Armed Forces under the British Era**

Since Burma became a British colony in 1886 there was no army for the Burmese. Later, when the British-sponsored 'Burma Rifles' were established, the bulk of the soldiers in the British-trained army and the Para Military Police Force were of minority ethnic groups such as Chins, Kachins and Karens. Most of them were “Converted Christians” from their natural beliefs. It cannot be ruled out that it was part of the 'Tactic and Strategy' or 'the Policy of Divide and Rule' of the Colonial Masters then. In any case, the British Rulers never trusted the majority Buddhists population of Burma, especially the majority ethnic group, the Burmese (including Rakhaings and Mons). The Burmese (including Rakhaings and Mons) were rarely accepted in the armed forces before the First World War. There were three types of commissioned officers in the British Indian Empire. A King's commissioned Indian officer (KCIO) was an Indian officer of the British Indian Army who held a full King's commission after training at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, in England, as opposed to the Indian commissioned officers (ICOs), who were trained at the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun, and the Viceroy's commissioned officers (VCOs), who were treated in almost all respects as commissioned officers, but who only had authority over Indian troops. The ranks of the King's commissioned officers were called Captain, Major, Colonel etc. etc., as in other countries, however, the ranks of the Viceroy's Commissioned officers were called Jamada, Suveda etc., and their salaries were

lower than that of the King's Commissioned officers. Only when the First World War broke out, the Buddhists especially the Burmese/Burman were allowed to join the army and sent to the Mesopotamia front (Middle East nowadays), however, most of them were recruited to the Sappers & Miners, Labour Corps and Medical Corps. *Nandawshay* Saya Tin, who later became a famous composer, was sent as an ambulance man or combat medic to the Mesopotamia front. Four Burmese Buddhists were appointed as King's Commissioned Officers. U Tin Htut, who later became the advisor of Gen. Aung San, was the most senior among these four Burmese.

### **2.3. The Second World War and the Burmese Army**

The Second World War started in Europe since 1939 when Hitler's armies invaded Poland, however, it was still a Sino-Japanese War in Asia. Only when the Japanese attacked American naval base in Pearl Harbour, Hawaii without declaration of war, the WW II started in Asia. As all Burmese knew, the Thirty Comrades led by Bo Aung San established the Burma Independence Army (BIA) with the help of Japanese on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1941 in Bangkok. When the Japanese occupied Burma, the BIA was dissolved and the Burma Defence Army (BDA) was formed. In 1943, the Japanese declared Burma as an 'independent nation'. Bo Aung San became minister of war and supreme commander of BDA with the rank of Major General. His deputy, Bo Let Ya was the Second in Command and deputy minister of war. In March 1945, Bo Aung San and his army, revolted against the Japanese. Then, the Revolutionary Burmese forces was called Patriotic Burmese Forces (PBF). When the British government came back to Burma, British-trained Burma Army and a part of Japanese-trained Burmese Army combined due to the Candy Treaty signed on 7th September 1945. Gen. Aung San left the army, became a politician and he nominated his deputy Bo Let Ya to be the Army chief. Gen. Aung San became the chairman of the Anti Facists Peoples' Freedom League (AFPFL). Bo Let Ya received the rank of colonel (later promoted to brigadier) in the newly Britished-sponsored Burma Army. Other Thirty Comrades Members Bo Ne Win, Bo Zeya and Bo Kyaw Zaw were appointed as majors, hence, they all were the King's Commissioned Officers.

### **2.4. Independence Struggle**

The Burmese Independence Struggle of the AFPFL led by Gen. Aung San was backed by the Burmese populace. There were many strikes. Finally even the Burma Police joined other unions and striked against the British government. The British governor of Burma, Sir Dorman Smith, went back to England on medical grounds. The British govt. appointed Major General Sir Hubert Rance as the new governor of Burma.

Sir Hubert Rance invited Gen. Aung San to work with him together. After Aung San had accepted the invitation of the last British Governor of Burma, Sir Hubert Rance, to form a new cabinet on 28th September 1946, His Majesty's Government in London recognized Burma Proper and the Burmese government as a *de facto* dominion state of the British Commonwealth. Aung San became a minister and the Vice Chairman of the Governor's Council of Burma, hence, *de facto* prime minister of Burma. He asked for the independence within a year. As the last attempt to maintain some parts of Burma inside the British Empire, the British government in London replied that they would give independence only to Burma Proper and not the "Frontier Hill Regions" of Burma. That's why Gen. Aung San had to discuss and negotiate with the leaders from the "Frontier Hill Regions" of Burma at Panlong, a small town on Shan Plateau. Finally, on 12th February 1947, the agreement was made to unite Burma Proper and the "Frontier Hill Regions" of Burma to form the Union of Burma.

Just in the eve of British India was going to split into two dominions in the British Commonwealth, namely India and Pakistan, Burma, however, was on the road to a fully independent state or a republic called Union of Burma outside the British Commonwealth. Most probably, the Burmese leaders then thought that the best way to prevent the Indian immigration waves was to stay away from the British Commonwealth. Only then, they could prevent the Indian immigration waves, especially Muslims from both India and Pakistan, once and forever.

There was a clause stating that a citizen of a Commonwealth country could go, stay, work and reside or settle in another Commonwealth country. Both Gen. Aung San and U Nu believed that only when Burma did not join the British Commonwealth, could they prevent immigration waves from the subcontinent, otherwise people from the subcontinent can come, work and settle in Burma. The fears of the Burmese leaders were reasonable because Prof. Desai, an Indian Hindu, wrote in his book "India and Burma", (Calcutta, 1954, P. 51) "*It is the outlook of the Republican Government of Burma, as well as of Burmans generally, that all the higher and lower civil and secretarial posts should be manned by their own nationals. The Indian is to be either eliminated, or, nationalized, provided he is willing and can qualify. Such a development was bound to come, for Burma is not India, and Burmans are not Indians. It has, however, placed thousands of Indians in Burma in a very difficult position. They had always looked upon Burma as a part of India and of the British Empire. Overnight, on 4th January 1948, these Indians found themselves to be foreigners, even though they were born and bred in Burma and had never been in India, and properly, movable and immovable*". .

Burmese had very bad experiences and ill-feelings towards the Indians throughout the whole colonial era because the British authorities safeguarded Indian rights in Burma, even when Burma became a separate Crown Colony in 1937, with the following words: "*No subject of His Majesty domiciled in Burma shall on grounds only of religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them, be ineligible for office under the Crown in Burma, or be prohibited by any law of Burma on any such grounds from acquiring, holding, or disposing of property or carrying on any occupation, trade, business, or profession in Burma*".

Hence, Indian immigration into Burma became the biggest nightmare for all Burmese governments as well as for the Burmese populace. Thus, the Burmese leader then thought that the best way to prevent the Indian immigration waves was to stay away from the British Commonwealth.

#### **2.4.1. De facto independent state**

After the signing of the 'Panlong Treaty' for the future Union of Burma, the British Governor in Burma became only a figurehead and the status of Burma became a *de facto* independent nation because Gen. Aung San even recognized the "Republic of Indonesia". In fact, both Burma and Dutch East Indies had not yet regained their independence. Burma was on the road to the peaceful transfer of power from the British, however, Indonesian national hero Sukarno and comrades were still in armed struggle for their freedom. Gen. Aung San accepted an envoy sent by Sukarno as *Chief de Mission* of the Legation of Indonesia in Rangoon. The British Governor closed his eyes and gave no comments. Furthermore, the armed wing of Aung San's political party, the Peoples' Volunteers Organization sent a plane full of arms and ammunitions to Sukarno's group as solidarity help.

### **3. Panlong Treaty**

#### **3.1. Union States**

##### **3.1.1. Chin Hills**

The peoples of Chin Hills did not want to accept statehood although they were granted. They wanted to remain as a division inside the mainland and asked for the same development as a division of the mainland. That's why, their area was not called Chin State instead 'Chin Special Division' although she has similar rights as an union state. There was a Minister for Chin Special Division with the rank of a cabinet minister and he was named Chin Affairs Minister. Only in 1974 under the BSPP Regime, according to the new constitution the 'Chin Special Division' became the Chin State, however, as everybody knew, the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma and its 1974 constitution were sham ones, the 'States' were only 'Nominal States', incomparable to the States of the 1947 constitution. The Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma was a centralized Nation and a 'One Party State'. The real power was only in the hands of an elite group in Rangoon, particularly in the hands of the Party Chairman and the Head of State then, U Ne Win. In fact, the authority and power given to the 'Chairman of a State Council' were much lesser than the authority and power of a Deputy Commissioner of a District under U Nu's Government. Apart from that, none of the union state has a right of secession from the Union of Burma, Hence, till now, none of the Union States in Burma gets the right and power of a state they wished due to the Panlong Treaty.

##### **3.1.2. Kachin State**

The Kachin hills under the Frontier Administration of British-Burma was only Putao District nowadays. Hence, it was too small to form a state. Gen. Aung San pointed out that fact and advised Kachin leaders then that he would present Myitkyina District and Bahmo District from "Burma Proper" to the future Kachin State if the Kachin leaders could promise and sign in the treaty that the Kachin State and its people would neither try nor request to secede from the future Union of Burma. The Kachin leaders realized that it was a profitable deal from their side and signed the treaty. So, the Kachin state, which has no right of secession from Burma, was formed. There was a Minister for Kachin State with the rank of a cabinet minister and he was named Kachin State Minister. Many Shans and Burmese in Myitkyina District and Bahmo District demonstrated against that deal. Some AFPFL leaders and members too were unhappy with Aung San's proposal because that deal was made without any consultation with them.

##### **3.1.3. Shan State**

There were 33 feudal states on the Shan Plateau ruled by feudal lords called Saw Bwas. Shan state was formed by uniting these 33 feudal states. There was a Minister for Shan State with the rank of a cabinet minister and he was named Shan State Minister. After staying ten years inside the Union of Burma, the Shan state has a right of secession from the Union of Burma, if the leaders and peoples of the Shan state wish.

##### **3.1.4. Kayah State *alias* Karenni State**

There were four feudal states in the Karenni areas ruled by feudal lords called Saw Phyas.

**Kayah State** *alias* Karenni State was formed by uniting these four feudal states. Same as Shan state, the Karenni state too has a right of secession from the Union of Burma after staying ten years inside the union, if the leaders and peoples of the state wish.

Later, in Rangoon Gen. Aung San was questioned by some of his colleagues why he had allowed the secession right for two states after ten years. His answer was short, however, straight forward to the point; *“Within these ten years, if we can treat them really as family members, they would really feel like our siblings and they would never think of secession from the Union of Burma. If they are not happy with us and want to secede from Union of Burma, it must be our fault that we do not treat them as our own siblings”*.

### **3.1.5 The Uninvited Major Ethnic Groups**

The representatives of the Arakanese (Rakhaings), Mons and Karen were not invited to the Panlong Conference. The Rakhaings considered that point as a racial discrimination and degrading them since they used to have a parallel kingdom to the Burmese until 1784. The Mons felt the same as the Rakhaings. The Karens were also unhappy because they did not get a union state like Kachins, Shans etc.. The Karens considered themselves to be the second largest ethnic group in Burma next to the Bamas (Burmese/Burman). Hence, they too felt it as a racial discrimination.

### **3.1.6 Why were these ethnic groups not invited?**

The aim of the Panlong treaty was to unify Burma Proper and “Frontier Hill Regions” of Burma so that all peoples of Burma can gain the independence simultaneously . Since the areas of Mons, Rakhaings and Karens were put inside Burma Proper by the British, these three ethnic groups would get independence together with the Burmese (Bama) in any case. For Gen. Aung San and the AFPFL leaders the independence and formation of the Union of Burma were their first priority. Only after gaining the independence they could consider about the formation of new states. While Aung San was alive it was okay, because most of the ethnic leaders trusted him. Unfortunately, however, Aung San and many of his cabinet ministers were assassinated on 19th July 1947, a few months before the independence. Thus, problems evolved and exploded after the Burmese Independence.

### **3.1.7. Was Panlong Treaty properly applied?**

The answer is: “No, unfortunately not!” The expectation of Gen. Aung San and the leaders of the “Frontier Hill Regions” vanished after Gen. Aung San and some leaders were assassinated. The Constitution of the Union of Burma approved by the parliament just after two weeks of the assassination of Gen. Aung San deviated more or less from the Panlong Treaty. Union of Burma became a “Unitary State” rather than a “Union of the Federal States”. Whenever some leaders from the “Frontier Hill Regions” of Burma wanted to discuss that point at the parliament U Nu, AFPFL leaders and Sao Shwe Thaik, the designated president for the future Union of Burma consoled them by saying “Let us declare the independence first. After that, we can discuss and settle those problems brotherly ”. Hence, some problems cannot be solved after the Burmese Independence and ended up as armed conflicts.

## **4. Post-Independence Era**

### **4.1. Formation of Karen, Mon and Rakhaing states**



#### 4.1.1. Formation of Karen State

As mentioned earlier, the Karens considered themselves to be the second largest ethnic group in Burma next to the Bamas (Burmese/Burman). Hence, they felt it was a racial discrimination that they could not have their own state like Kachins etc. etc., and therefore asked for the right to form their own state. The AFPFL Government had no objection to their demands, however, the problem was where they had to create the Karen State because the Karens, not like Kachin, Chins, Shans etc. etc, live everywhere in Burma. The Karen leaders wanted the Irrawaddy Delta Area to form the Karen State. There were about one million Karens living in the Irrawaddy Delta Area then, however, there were about two millions Bamas (Burmese/Burman) in that same area. Since the Karens were not majorities in the Irrawaddy Delta Area, their demand was turned down. It became like pouring gasoline on the fire, and the armed rebellion of the Karens started in March 1949. The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) forces were strongest among the Karen rebels.

In fact, there were ill feelings between Bamas (Burmese/Burman) and Karens in the past. The Bamas felt the Karens were ultra favoured by the British and the Karens became a "specially-protected ethnic groups" under the British rule. On the other hand, the Karens could not forget the massacre of Karen villages in the Irrawaddy Delta Area by the Japanese-sponsored Burma Independence Army in 1942. They felt that they were discriminated by the Bamas (Burmese/Burman) Government because there were many coincidences.

- (i) The Chief of all Burmese Defense Forces, Lt. Gen. Smith Dunn, a Karen, was forced to retire by the Burmese government.
- (ii) The Chief of the Burma Air Force, Wing Commander Saw Shisho, a Karen, was sent abroad as a Burmese Military Attaché.
- (iii) Many senior Karen officers from all armed forces were either forced to retire or dismissed or demoted by the newly appointed defence and home minister Lt. Gen. Ne Win.

Actually, Ne Win either dismissed or demoted almost all of the British-trained officers, regardless of race and religion. The first victim was the then commander of Lower Burma, Brigadier Aung Thin, a Burmese Buddhist. He was dismissed without any compensation and his position was given to Colonel Kyaw Zaw, the then commander of Upper Burma. The second victim was an Arakanese (Rakahing Buddhist), Major General Htun Hla Oung, the Inspector General of Burma Police then. He was removed from his position and sent as the Burmese Military Attaché to the United Kingdom, a post which is only for colonels and was, hence, a type of demotion. Only Sandhurst-trained Karen, Brigadier Saw Kya Doe, was allowed to remain in the Burma Army for one or two years, not only because he and his battalion joined the Burmese Armies during the Japanese Era but also because he fought against the Karen and other rebels. Later even Saw Kya Doe was fed up with the war, resigned from the army and joined his former boss, Bo Let Ya, who became one of the richest men in Burma through his Martaban Fisheries Co. Ltd.

In 1949 the government troops had to face the uphill battle of the civil war and many cities were occupied by the anti-government troops. Mandalay, the second city of Burma and the largest city in Upper Burma was occupied by the Three Party Alliance (Karen, the Red Flag Communists and the White Flag Communists). Insein, only ten miles away from the city centre of Rangoon was taken by the Karen Rebels. The AFPFL Government of Burma was given a nickname the 'Rangoon Government'. One of the anti-government troops,

Peoples Volunteer Organisation, remained neutral between the government troops and the Burmese Communists troops, however, the Peoples Volunteer Organisation Forces joined the government troops when the operations were made against the Karen troops. It was seen by the Karens as a racial act against them.

In 1951, the government became upper hand of the civil war and many cities were reoccupied by the government troops. Finally, the Karens and the AFPFL government agreed to form the Northern Tenasserim Division, where the Karens are majority, as the Karen state with Pa An as the Capital. There was a Minister for Karen State with the rank of a cabinet minister and he was named Karen State Minister. In that way, the Karen state, which has no right of secession from Burma, was formed.

#### **4.1.2. Formation of Mon State**

Once, the whole of Lower Burma from the south of the city of Pyay (Prome) belonged to the Mon Kingdom. However when the Burmese king Alaung Phaya annexed the Mon Kingdom in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, many people in lower Burma switched their mother tongue from Mon to Burmese and considered themselves to be Burmese. As the result, in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century almost all towns in Lower Burma like Yangon (Rangoon), Bago (Pegu), towns in Irrawaddy Delta became Burmese towns. Even in Thaton and Moulmein (Mawlamyaing) Burmese language is more popular than Mon. That's why it was difficult for both sides (the AFPFL Govt. and Mon leaders) to make a boundary of the Mon State and therefore the formation of Mon state was delayed. Some Mons formed the Mon National Defence Organisation (MNDO) and went underground to fight against the AFPFL Govt.. Before the 1960 elections U Nu promised to grant the Mon State if his party would win. When he was elected as prime minister the negotiations started that Mon State would be formed based on the areas of the Moulmein District and the Thaton District. Before it could happen, there was an army coup d'état headed by Gen. Ne Win and the constitution was suspended.

Only in 1974 under the BSPP Regime, according to the new constitution the 'Upper Tenasserim Division' (Moulmein District and the Thaton District) became the Mon State, however, as mentioned earlier, the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma and its 1974 constitution were sham ones, the 'States' were incomparable to the States of the 1947 constitution, and the authority and power given to the 'Chairman of a State Council' were much lesser than the authority and power of a Deputy Commissioner of a District under U Nu's Government, all of the Union States in Burma not yet receive the right and power of a state they wished due to the Panlong Treaty.

#### **4.1.3. Formation of Rakhine State**

The Arakan Ranges lie between Arakan and the mainland. Hence, there were not too much problems in the border issue except some territories in the lowest part of the Arakan coast were transferred into the Irrawaddy Division by the early British Era for their administrative convenience, and in 1954, the administration of the Paletwa township was transferred from the Arakan Division to the Chin Special Division by the AFPFL gov't. There were some Arakanese rebels fighting against the Burmese government. These Arakanese rebels were allies of the communists, either of the Red Flag Party or of the White Flag Party. In Arakan, the Red Flag Communist Party was stronger than the White Flag Communist Party. However, the biggest problem which delayed the formation of Rakhine State was caused by the Bengali immigrants in Arakan.

#### 4.1.3.1 Bengali immigration waves

Since Arakan has direct land border with Bengal, particularly with Chittagong District, many Chittagonian Bengalis were brought into Arakan as cheap labourers, peasants and coolies by the British.

Jacques Leider wrote in *Forging Buddhist Credentials as a Tool of Legitimacy and Ethnic Identity: A Study of Arakan's Subjection in Nineteenth-Century Burma*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51, 2008, p.424: "*The major interest of the East India Company in Arakan lay in the extension of rice cultivation in the Kaladan and Lemro Valleys. This plan succeeded because the scores of Bengal Muslim labourers who had been imported from Chittagong in the middle of the nineteenth century, Akyab, the new capital, had indeed become a major port of export of rice for Europe*".

Some Chittagonian Bengalis were brought to Arakan to construct a railway track between the two towns, Butheedaung and Maungdaw. The construction project (1916-18) was in fact in operation before the whole business was brought down by a devastating cyclone, but those Chittagonian Bengalis never returned back to Bengal. According to the report of the Directorate of Health (1930-31), about 40000 Chittagonian Bengalis came to Maungdaw annually to work in that area, however, it was not recorded how many of them returned to Bengal.

R.B. Smart, the deputy assistant commissioner of Akyab wrote in *Burma Gazetteer, Akyab District*, p. 86 : "*Since 1879, immigration has taken place on a much larger scale, and the descendants of the slaves are resident for the most part in the Kyauktaw and Myohaung (Mrauk-U) townships. Maungdaw Township has been overrun by Chittagonian immigrants. Butheedaung is not far behind and new arrivals will be found in almost every part of the district.*

Those Bengali settlers in Arakan were noted by British for their administrative purposes either as Hindus or as Muslims according to their religion. Muslim settlers outnumbered the Hindu settlers.

The Census Reports of Akyab (Sittwe) District for 1871, 1901, and 1911 is as follows:

Races	1871	1901	1911
Mahomedan	58255	154887	178647
Burmese	4632	35751	92185
Arakanese	171612	230649	209432
Shan	334	80	59
Hill Tribes	38577	35489	34020
Others	606	1355	1146
Total	276691	481666	529943

This table shows very clearly that Chittagonian Bengalis were 21.05% of the total population in 1871, became 32.1% in 1901 and increased to 33.71% in 1911. Their population growth was 272% within 30 years because of huge immigration waves.

In this way, Arakan was a *colonie d'exploitation* to the British, but to the Chittagonian Bengalis, Arakan became a *colonie de peuplement*. The very similar thing happened in Assam for Tea Plantations.

In any case, the British Colonial Officers recorded clearly that those Bengali immigrants were non-indigenous races in Akyab District Gazetteer 1906 :

### **Indigenous Races:**

Arakanese (239649), Burmese (35751), Kamis (11595), Mros (10074), Chins (9415) Daingnets (3412), Chaungthas (247) and Thets (232).

### **Non-indigenous Races:**

British (209), Eurasians (158), Chinese (439), Shaikhs (152074), Saiyards (1254), Pathans (126), Zairbadis (108) Other Musulman (1325), Sudras (6016), Kayasths (2888), Uriyas (625), Brahmans (398), Chatris (377), Dhobis (263), Waddars (233), Nats (226), Barua Maghs (165), Chetties (164), Doms (143), Malas (142), Marabans (125), Baniyas (114) and other Hindu Castes (2104).

Because of those Bengali immigration waves a famous archaeologist in Burma, Prof. E. Forschhammer, had predicted since 1892 that generally Burma, particularly Arakan would become the 'Palestine of the Far East'. (See details in E. Forchhammer, *Papers on Subjects Relating to the Archaeology of Burma: A Report on the History of Arakan*. Rangoon: Government Press, 1892).

#### **4.1.3.2. Attempts on Islamization**

##### **4.1.3.2.1 Their First Attempt**

As predicted by Prof. Forchhammer the problem started in 1936. Before Burma was separated from British India and became a Crown Colony in 1937, some Islamists from Northern Arakan went to India in 1936, met leaders of the Muslim League, and requested that the Muslim League should demand the British Government for the incorporation of Butheedaung and Maungdaw townships into British India, however, their attempt failed. The Muslim League of India could not do anything because:

1. The British got Arakan Division from Burmese Empire due to the Yantabo Treaty in 1826.
2. Due to the Diarchy Reforms of Burma in 1923, Arakan was under 'Burma Proper'.
3. Except in the very early colonial years from 1826 to 1852, Arakan neither belonged to Bengal nor did the British try to join Arakan with India. Arakan was always under the administration of British-Burma, although Burma too was under the umbrella of the British Indian Empire until 1937.

The interesting fact is: This delegation did not call themselves as "Rohingyas".

##### **4.1.3.2.2. Their Second Attempt**

Just in the eve of British India was going to split into two dominions in the British Commonwealth, namely India and Pakista, Burma, however, was on the road to a fully independent state outside the British Commonwealth, some members of the 'Juniyatu Olamai' religious association went to Karachi on a delegation in 1946 to discuss the incorporation of Butheedaung, Maungdaw and also Rathedaung townships into East Pakistan. This was the Second Attempt at Islamization of Arakan, however, for what reason I don't know, this delegation too did not call themselves as "Rohingyas".

The Burmese leader then, General Aung San, gave his clear position to Mohamad Ali Jinnah that he would not tolerate, if Pakistan would interfere in Burmese affairs. The very similar incident had happened in Assam when British India was separated into two dominions called India and Pakistan. After his aborted attempt of incorporation of Assam into East Pakistan, Jinnah had learnt a good lesson and did not interfere directly in the internal affairs of Burma. Here, I would like to cite the "REPORT ON ILLEGAL MIGRATION INTO ASSAM SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA BY THE GOVERNOR OF ASSAM, 8 November 1998". In Chapter II where it was written: "*When the demand for Partition was raised, it was visualized that Pakistan would comprise Muslim majority provinces in the West and Bang-e-Islam comprising Bengal and Assam, in the East. Mr. Moinul Haque Chowdhary the Private Secretary of Jinnah, who after independence became a Minister in Assam and later at Delhi, told Jinnah that he would "present Assam to him on a silver platter". Jinnah confidently declared at Guwahati that Assam was in his pocket. The Cabinet Mission Plan placed Assam in Group C with Bengal. Both the Congress High Command and the Muslim League accepted the grouping plan but Lokapriya Gopinath Borodoloi vehemently opposed it. He was supported by Mahatma Gandhi. The grouping plan was foiled and Assam was saved from becoming a part of Pakistan*".

#### **4.1.3.2.3 The Third Attempt of the Bengalis**

While Burma was on the way to regain her independence from Great Britain, on 19th July 1947, Gen. Aung San, "the Father of Burmese Independence" and almost all members of his cabinet were assassinated. The British Governor of Burma, Sir Hubert Rance had to call Thakin Nu (later U Nu) the vice chairman of the AFPFL Party then, and requested him to form a new government. In the mean time, some of the Chittagonian Bengalis went underground and called themselves "Mujahid" rebels fighting the Burmese government. It was even before Burma regained her independence from Great Britain. The commander of the Burmese Infantry Regiment No. 5 fighting against these "Mujahid" rebels was a British officer called Lt. Colonel Roger Campagnac. Newly promoted Lt. Col. Kyaw Zaw (a member of the Thirty Comrades and later Brig. Gen. in the early 50's) and Major Kyi Maung (later Colonel and also a member of the Revolutionary Council in 1962 but dismissed later) were also at that front to fight those Mujahid Rebels. Ex. Gen. Tin Oo, a Patron of NLD, was a fresh graduate from the military academy and became a junior officer at that front.

#### **4.1.3.2.4. The Fourth Attempt of the Bengalis**

Since 1948, just a few months after the Burmese Independence, the then Burmese Prime Minister U Nu was having problems in politics. There were many groups of insurgents everywhere. The Arakanese (Rakhaing) withdrew their support for the government because their demand for a union state status like the Shans, Kachins, Kayahs and Chins was not granted in the early 1950's. The party of the Arakanese (Rakhaings), "The Arakan National Union Organization" supported the opposition.

In the mean time, the Mujahids carried Pakistani flag and their slogan was: "*Pakistan Zindabad, Allah Mujahid*" (*Long Live Victorious Pakistan under the Guidance of Allah*)! Whenever Burma Armed Forces chased them, they retreated to their bases on the other side of the Burmese border into East Pakistan.

On May 18, 1949 The Hindustan Standard Newspaper reports on the Mujahids: "*A dangerous aspect of this fighting is its international aspect: the Moslem insurgents have*

*been carrying the Pakistani flag, and many of them clamor for the incorporation of this end of Arakan with Pakistan. It was suspected that they drew arms from across the border; the Government, however, is now satisfied that their rifles and ammunition are old stocks, left behind by the Japanese and British.... The great majority of Arakan Moslems are said to be really Pakistanis from Chittagong, even if they have been settled here for a generation. Out of the 130,000 here, 80,000 are still Pakistani citizens."*

The Mujahids were human traffickers too. There were many illegal immigrants from East Pakistan in the Arakan Division of Burma. Many of them were brought by the Mujahids. Milton W. Meyer wrote: "*A common boundary existed with East Pakistan, and with a Muslim minority in adjoining Arakan, there was some illegal immigration from the over populated neighbour*". (See details in Milton W. Meyer, *Southeast Asia (A Brief History)*, A Littlefield, Adams & Co., New Jersey, 1966, p. 121).

#### **4.1.3.2.5. The Fifth Attempt**

Gen. Li Mi and his Kuomintang army lost the war against the Communists in Mainland China. Hence, they moved southwards and invaded eastern part of Burma. So, Shan State was declared Martial Law and ruled by a military governor. There were many groups of insurgents everywhere. As mentioned earlier, the Three Party Alliance (Karen, Red Flag Communists and White Flag Communists) captured Mandalay, the second largest city of Burma. The Karen rebels captured the town Insein, which is only ten miles away from the Rangoon city centre.

The Islamists of Chittagonian Bengalis in Arakan, using this opportunity, held a meeting in Alethankyaw Village in Maungdaw Township in June 1951 and they sent the following demands to the central government:

1. To establish immediately a free Muslim State in the status of condominium, for the Muslim Minority in Northern Arakan, separated from the Buddhist Arkanese (Rakhaing) Majority of the South, with its own defence force, police, and security unit;
2. To extend Rights so as to share with the Rakhaings (Arakanese) on a 50:50 basis in representation and management of the defence of Arakan (Rakhaing State) as well as in the administration of Sittwe (Akyab), the metropolis and the port city, which would be divided into the Muslims and Rakhaings zones, priority being given to the Muslims co-administrator holding higher rank over the alternate Arakanese (Rakhaing) counterpart in rotation of the term of office;
3. To accord the Muslim state the same status as extended to the Chins, the Kachins, the Shans, and the Karen State, with the right of proportionate representation on the constituent assembly and Upper Chamber of legislature;
4. To appoint a Muslim representative from Northern Arakan as the Muslim Affairs Minister in the Government of the Union of Burma;
5. To guarantee fair and adequate representation of the Muslims in the Civil Service, Judiciary, and Armed Forces of the Union of Burma;
6. To provide complete freedom and equality in the field of religion, culture, communal education, and economy;
7. To protect Muslim properties and businesses, and to compensate in case of destruction;
8. To establish immediately a free Muslim State in the status of condominium, for the Muslim Minority in Northern Arakan, separated from the Buddhist Arkanese

(Rakhaing) Majority of the South, with its own defence force, police, and security unit;

9. To extend Rights so as to share with the Rakhaings (Arakanese) on a 50:50 basis in representation and management of the defence of Arakan (Rakhaing State) as well as in the administration of Sittwe (Akyab), the metropolis and the port city, which would be divided into the Muslims and Rakhaings zones, priority being given to the Muslims co-administrator holding higher rank over the alternate Arakanese (Rakhaing) counterpart in rotation of the term of office;
10. To accord the Muslim state the same status as extended to the Chins, the Kachins, the Shans, and the Karen State, with the right of proportionate representation on the constituent assembly and Upper Chamber of legislature;
11. To appoint a Muslim representative from Northern Arakan as the Muslim Affairs Minister in the Government of the Union of Burma;
12. To guarantee fair and adequate representation of the Muslims in the Civil Service, Judiciary, and Armed Forces of the Union of Burma;
13. To provide complete freedom and equality in the field of religion, culture, communal education, and economy;
14. To protect Muslim properties and businesses, and to compensate in case of destruction;
15. To promote the welfare of the Muslim Community;
16. To establish quasi courts, each to be presided over by grand mufti (a judge who interprets Islamic Laws), with the power to decide cases concerning the social and personal life of the Muslim according to the laws and principles of the Holy Sharia;
17. To accord rights to form a statutory Muslim Council (Majlis Islamia), with the approval of the Muslim conference, for the management of the religious, social, educational, and cultural affairs, and also the administration of the Muslim Institutions in order to promote welfare of the Muslims in the Union of Burma according to the Islamic Laws;
18. To establish, with the financial aid of the Government of the Union of Burma, Islamic schools and colleges whose medium of teaching being Arabic (the canonical tongue of Islam);
19. To facilitate teaching of Urdu, Arabic, and Diniyat (Islamic religious instructions) in all the public schools throughout the country where the Muslim students represent the considerable number;
20. To further extend and develop the Urdu schools;
21. To give complete freedom to the Muslims to found and run their own educational, religious, and culutural institutions;
22. To make Urdu the medium of instruction for the Muslims in the primary and secondary schools;
23. To refrain from imposing other languages on the Muslims against their will or to the detriment of the Muslim culture and integrity;
24. Furthermore, they sent an oral request to the Government of the Union of Burma through two Muslim Ministers in the Cabinet, U Rashid and U Latiff;

- (i) Pork and pork products should not be sold in Burmese markets because there are shops owned by Muslims in the markets;
- (ii) Pork and pork products should be sold only in special shops in separate areas;
- (iii) Pork and pork products must be wrapped properly so that these cannot be seen by Muslims;
- (iv) According to the Koran a Muslim has to worship only Allah. Because of this reason, they can neither salute the Flag of the Union of Burma nor they can sing the Burmese National Anthem;

Which kind of government of a non-Muslim country on the earth could tolerate such kinds of undeserved demands? Of course, their one-sided demands were turned down by the Burmese government on the spot.

The Alethankyaw Demands was sent to the Burmese government in June 1951. After the government turned down their undeserved demands, Mr. Abdul Gafar started using that political name 'Rohingya' in August 1951, just to claim the undue status that the Chittagonian Bengalis were one of the indigenous peoples of Burma. Could their movements only be a coincidence?

#### **4.1.3.2.6 The Sixth Attempt**

When their undue demands were turned down the Bengalis changed their tactic and strategy that they tried to become an ally of the ruling AFPFL Party.

In the 1952 elections, the Arakanese voted against the ruling AFPFL Party and they voted for the "Arakanese National Union Party" which was the allied party of the opposition. U Nu and AFPFL wanted to "punish" the Arakanese in 1956 elections.

Using this opportunity, some Muslim leaders approached U Nu and U Ba Swe through the two Muslim ministers in the cabinet and promised for their votes if their wishes would be fulfilled by the AFPFL. Their approach was formally accepted by U Nu and U Ba Swe. The then Prime Minister U Nu and his deputy U Ba Swe also wanted to please their two Muslim ministers, Mr. Rashid and Mr. Latiff, *alias* U Khin Maung Latt, who expected support from the Bengali Muslims. Minister of Judicial Affairs, U Latiff *alias* U Khin Maung Latt went to Arakan for election campaign. In that campaign, the judicial minister of the Burmese government had to use Urdu (sometimes Bengali through an interpreter) because those people who wanted to become Burmese citizens neither understand Burmese nor Arakanese. At that time the immigration department was under the ministry of judicial affairs. Later about three hundred thousand Chittagong Bengalis, regardless if they or their ancestors had lived in the Arakan Division of Burma before the Second World War or not, became Burmese citizens.

In 1956 election, the Arakani Muslims Party, the allied party of the AFPFL won all four constituencies in Northern Arakan. Then, Mr. Abu Bawshaw became MP in Butheedaung constituency, Mr. Sultan Mahmud and Mr. Abdul Gafer in Maungdaw and Mr. Abul Kai in Rathedaung. Their rival candidates U San Tun Aung, an Arakanese and even a "Kaman" Muslim advocate U Po Khine lost in the elections because they could not speak Chittagonian dialect of the Bengali language. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Abdul Gafar and his followers could not use that name "Rohingya" for their party inside both Burmese Upper and Lower Houses, as well as their followers could not use that name openly because the most senior member of their group Mr. Sultan Mahmud was strongly opposing that term, instead he preferred to use the term Arakani Muslims. It cannot be ruled out, that was the reason why both Muslim delegations went to meet Muslim League of India in 1936 and also in 1946 as well as Mujahid Rebels did not use the term 'Rohingya'. However, one can see that the attempt of the Bengalis was successful to a certain extent.

In fact, U Nu, U Ba Swe and the AFPFL government started destroying the destiny of the Rakhines and selling the future of Arakan to the hands of the Bengali settlers.

#### **4.1.3.3 What does 'Rohingya' mean?**



The term "Rohingya" is neither a name of an ethnic group nor a historical name, instead that name was invented for the sake of a political movement and to define a political movement. Hence, it is a political term.

In the Bengali language the country Arakan is called either 'Rohan' or 'Rosan', and The real natives of that land, the Arakanese or the Rakhaings, are called 'Rohanja' or 'Rosawnga' due to the dialects. 'Rohingya' is a name used by the Bengalis to denote a Rakhaing/Rakhine – a Buddhist natives of Arakan or an Arakanese. In other words, 'Rohingya', 'Mogg' and 'Magh' are the synonyms in Bengali language and it gives the meaning Arakanese or Rakhaing.

However, most of the the Arakanese (Rakhaings) did not and do not know that they were and are called Rohanga/Rosanga/Rohaunga/Rosawnga and Mogs/ Maghs/ Moggs by the Bengalis as the similar way, most of the Burmese do not know that they are called "Mien Tien" by the Chinese, "Bramah" by the Indians, "Phama" by the Thais and "Phumea" by the Cambodians.

Since the word is of Bengali origin, some of the Bengali Muslim secessionist groups such as Mujahid Rebels and some above-ground Bengali Muslims got the golden opportunity by using this name to identify themselves to be the natives of Arakan and named themselves as 'Rohingya' in the 50's. Burmese and all natives of Burma had neither heard nor used that term . Not only the people of Burma but also the British colonial rulers who put Burma into the British Raj never recorded that term. Nor that term can be found in the etymology books and records written by Portuguese, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, British and even by Indians!!

That's why not only the Burmese government but also the whole populace of Burma could not and cannot accept that term.

Derek Tonkin, a retired British ambassador wrote in "The 'Rohingya' Identity: The British Experience in Arakan": *"But supporters of Rakhine Muslims overseas should at the same time acknowledge that the particular designation 'Rohingya' had no serious historical validity prior to independence in 1948. If 'Rohingya' were felt to be a step too far, why not seek to modernise the 'Arakan Muhammadan' of 1901?"*

A historian specializing in Arakanese history, Dr. Jacques Leider stated clearly during his interview with the Irrawaddy Magazine on 8th July 2012:

Q: *Are the Rohingya an ethnic group of Burma?*

A: *My answer is that Rohingya is not an ethnic concept. Okay, they can stand up and say we are an ethnic group inside Myanmar. But I think that is not the best way. When you argue we are Muslims and we have been living in Rakhine for several generations, nobody can deny it. For me, Rohingya is the term, which is an old word that has been claimed as above all as a political label after the independence of Myanmar. For the moment, I do not see that all the people there readily submit to one and a single label. When I was in Bangladesh, people pointed out Muslims to me who originally lived in Rakhine. They have now moved to Bangladesh and when you ask them, "are you Rohingya coming from Rakhine?" they say, "no, we are Muslims who live in Rakhine, we do not take for us the label Rohingya."*

Furthermore Dr. Jacques Leider pointed out clearly that rumors spread out:

**Q:** *Is the international media mistaken when they use phrases like “genocide of the Rohingya?”*

**A:** *Yes, a lot. Journalists have to focus more on diversifying their sources of documentation. I agree it may not be easy. I think there is enormous responsibility on media in Myanmar now that is opening up. Myanmar writers, Myanmar ethnicities take a responsible stand on this. It will not help if they take sides. But you need to be critical and self-critical.*

#### **4.1.3.4 Mistakes committed by politicians unwittingly**

In the 1960 election campaign, both U Nu of the “Clean Fraction” and U Ba Swe of the “Stable Fraction”, without thinking about the real meaning of that term, occasionally used the term “Rohingya” for the Chittagonian Bengali Muslims. Later, at the surrendering ceremony of the Mujahid Rebels in 1960, Vice Chief of Staff (Army) then, Brigadier General Aung Gyi accidentally used the term Rohingya. Nowadays, Rohingyarist are taking advantage of those events and abused U Nu, U Ba Swe and Brigadier Aung Gyi's words as if those leaders recognized them as an ethnic group of Burma.

In 1960, after winning the election, U Nu wanted to show his gratefulness to Chittagonian Bengali voters and allowed them to broadcast their language as “Rohingya” after English and Hindustani programs, that means their language too was a foreign language.

When the Burma Broadcasting Service BBS was established, Burma was still under the umbrella of the British Indian Empire. At that time, English was the official language and Hindustani was the *lingua franca* of the subcontinent. Burmese is *lingua franca* in Burma and Karens were the second largest ethnic group in Burma next to Burmese. That's why four languages namely Burmese, Karen, English and Hindustani programs were broadcasted. When Burma became an independent nation in 1948 the government still broadcasted these four languages, however, the situation changed. Only Burmese and Karen became the national languages but English and Hindustani automatically became foreign languages. Burmese became the official language as well as *lingua franca*!

However, Rohingyayrists nowadays abused that political favoritism with their own interpretation and are claiming that U Nu allowed them to broadcast their language under the National Languages Programs and therefore they were *de facto* recognized by U Nu as an ethnic group of Burma. If it was the case, similarly to 'so-called Rohingya', English and Hindustani languages too have a right to claim that they were national languages of Burma.

To regain back his power, U Nu had promised many things before the election in 1960 which later became contradictory to each other. For example he promised to declare Buddhism as the State Religion without considering the fact that there are two Christian majority states in Burma, namely the Kachin and the Chin States, where at least 60% of the population are Christians. The Karen (Kayin) state, however, was and is not a Christian majority state. Only 30% of the Karens in Burma are Christians. At least 45% of Karens are Buddhist and the rest are nature worshippers. When the MPs discussed in parliament to declare Buddhism as the state religion, U Nu's own party members of the Kachin and Chin States as well as his good friend, the Muslim Minister U Rashid protested and voted against it, however, the majority of the MPs voted for it and Buddhism became state religion. After that the Kachin rebellion K.I.A (the Kachin Independence Army) came into being.

Furthermore, U Nu promised the formation of the Rakhine State, however, Butheedaung and Maungdaw township were named Mayu Frontier District and this district was separated from the Arakan Division but ruled directly from the prime minister's office. The Bengalis Muslims took the golden opportunity again demanded to change the Mayu Frontier District into a 'Rohingya Muslim State'. The Bengali leaders tried again to have their group accepted as "Indigenous Muslims" or as an "indigenous ethnic group" of Burma. This time they generally used the name "The Arakan Muslims", however, occasionally they also used the name "Rohingyas". Their demands for an "indigenous ethnic group" was turned down again on the ground that Chittagonian Bengalis were never of the indigenous race of Arakan and they and their ancestors were settlers only, and therefore they could be considered in the same category as the Indians, the Pakistanis and the Chinese immigrants. Then their "History Professors" like M. A. Tir alias Ba Tha and Maung Than Lwin began to fabricate the "Histories".

U Nu was totally trapped in his own promises which he could not solve easily. General Ne Win carried out the Army coup d'état on 2nd March 1962. The President of the Union U Win Maung, Premier Nu, the whole cabinet, all Shan and Kayah leaders and even all judges of the Supreme Court were detained.

After U Nu's government was overthrown by General Ne Win through a military coup, the constitution was suspended. Buddhism was no more state religion. The name "Rohingya" disappeared from the Burmese political scene. Hindustani and "Rohingya" broadcasts ended, but the national language programs increased. Shan, Kachin, Chin, Kayah, Mon and Arakanese (Rakhaing/Rakhine) language programs were introduced in addition to Burmese and Karen. Only then, the real national languages program in BBS came into being. These programs did not exist under the U Nu era. Hence, it is no longer to be discussed whether the so-call Rohingya language was recognized by U Nu as a national language or not!

Ne Win abolished Mayu Frontier District. Butheedaung and Maungdaw township were administered back by the Arakan Division, the name "Rohingya" disappeared from the Burmese political scene.

In 1974, the new constitution came into being and the Arakan Division became the Rakhine State. However, as mentioned earlier by Chin and Mon States, till now none of the Union States in Burma gets the right and power of a state they wished due to the Panlong Treaty.

## **5. Conclusion**

Many people believe that the Panlong Agreement is the foundation stone of the Union of Burma, however, some people argue that the treaty is not the basis of the genuine Union because the representatives of some major ethnic groups like the Karens, Rakhines and Mons were neither invited to that conference nor they signed in that agreement.

Some argued that the aim of the Panlong treaty was to unify Burma Proper and the "Frontier Hill Regions" of Burma so that all peoples of Burma can gain the independence simultaneously. Since the areas of Mons, Rakhaings and Karens were put inside Burma Proper by the British, these three ethnic groups would get independence together with the Burmese (Bama) in any case. That's why they were not invited.

In the present author's opinion, though the above-mentioned reason was not incorrect, it was not very proper and fair enough. In any case they, the authorities of Burma Proper then, should have invited these three big groups namely the Karens, the second largest ethnic group in Burma then, as well as the Mons and Rakhines who used to have rival kingdoms with the Burmese until the middle and end of 18th century respectively, so that these three big ethnic groups could also have enjoyed to have the right of the union states same as other ethnic groups since 1947, and the central government too could have prevented the rebellion of these three ethnic groups .

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