MRAUK U ANALYSIS

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CHAPTER (S) - TRANSLATED IN ENGLISH
FOREWORD

This booklet is the translation of the Chapter (8) - *Bengali Issue in Rakhine State*, contained in the book namely “*Mrauk-U Sittan* (Mrauk-U Analysis)”, published in December 2017 by Saya U Maung Maung Soe, a political analyst.

Saya Maung Maung Soe wrote the book, “Mrauk U Sittan”, which thoroughly analyzed the Rakhine history and the current situations of politics and socio-economy of Rakhine, not only based on 42 reference books but also through his visits to Rakhine State and interviewed with 35 individuals in person before writing the book. As Mrauk-U, once the capital of the Rakhine Kingdom, represents the Rakhine people, he named the book “Mrauk-U Sittan”.

Saya Maung Maung Soe, the author of the book, was a former medical student and fled to the border area during the 1988 uprising that occurred in Myanmar. Then, he became a revolutionist who was against the then-military government. The main point here is that he neither represents the government nor the military. He is just a literature researcher as well as an expert on ethnic affairs. For his hard work in writing the book based on concrete evidences and real on-ground situations, he was well-deservedly awarded “the National Literature Award” by the Government of Myanmar in 2018.

In this booklet, it can be found out that he has comprehensively mentioned the brief history and current on-ground situations of Rakhine State, and his analyses are, correspondingly, very much close to the truth.

The Bengali issue in Rakhine State is a very challenging matter for Myanmar and the real situation was very far from the truth owing to the falsely-portrayal of the international media. Accordingly, the Chapter 8—Bengali Issue in Rakhine State is translated into English so that all the related stakeholders from international community will be well-informed about the perspective of a domestic analyst, compiled with the empirical interviewing at the very place of the issue arose.
Looking forward to the readers’ better understanding of the revealed truth about Myanmar!
Chapter – 8 –

Bengali Issue in Rakhine State

When it comes to resolving the problem of Rakhine State, Bengali issue shall not be left behind to consider. Nowadays, it can be said that international interference and pressure, dealing with the Bengali issue, are mounting and so loud. The international community may see the issue from the perspective of human rights. But, just seeing so is not enough. As a matter of fact, the Bengali issue in Rakhine State should be regarded not only as the humanitarian crisis but also as the historical one. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the Rakhine State in order to find out the truth and solution of the issue of Bengali Muslims in Rakhine State.

When the Bengali issue in Rakhine State is currently discussed, it is mainly focused on the present situation, from the human right perspective. Actually, if the present situation only is focused, it is also necessary to consider all the situations with comprehensive perspectives. To be frank, the authentic information of the on-ground situation cannot be verified by focusing on one side only, ignoring the other. Hence, the issue should be considered as the historical one as it is deeply-rooted in Rakhine State for a long time and it is also important to approach the issue with various perspectives.

Current Demography of Bengali Muslims in Rakhine State

According to the statistics of 2014, the following townships in Rakhine state are most populated by the Bengali Muslims;

1. Maungdaw township est. 450,000 people
2. Buthidaung township est. 250,000 people
3. Sittwe township est. 150,000 people
4. Thandwe township est. 80,000 people
In addition, the settlement of Bengali Muslims in small groups can also be found in different townships such as Rathedaung, Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minpya, Pauktaw, Myaypon, Kyaukphyu, and Ramree (Ram Bray). According to the above-stated statistics, around 1 million to 1.1 million Bengali Muslims are residing in Rakhine State.

In respect of demographic ratio, the three main townships which are most populated by the Bengalis are Maungdaw township (94%), Buthidaung township (84%) and Sittwe township (50%). Bengalis are residing in both rural area and towns of Maungdaw township and Buthidaung township, but in Sittwe township, Bengalis are mostly living in rural area rather than in the town.

However, the above-stated data is based on the statistics of 2014 and those areas would be much more populated at present. The current fact that cannot be concealed is that more than 1 million out of 3 million people residing in Rakhine State are Bengali Muslims.

Unfair Situation

Nowadays, when it comes to Myanmar, Bengali issue comes to the fore at the international arena. It also seizes the attention of most of the people. It happens due to the effective utilising of international media and huge financial support, so to assess. Much as those factors include, the main reason is because of biased and unfair circumstances from their points of view.

The international community is not satisfied with a couple of reasons. The first reason is the inability to resettle the Bengalis from IDP Camps in Rakhine State who had fled from their places of origin during the Rakhine-Bengali conflict in 2012. The list of IDP camps in Rakhine state from 2012 to the present is as follows:

1. Sittwe township 12 camps (approx. 90000 people)
2. Rathedaung township 2 camps (approx. 3000 people)
3. Pauktaw township 4 camps (approx. 10000 people)
4. Kyauktaw township 1 camp (approx. 500 people)
5. Myaypon township 1 camp (approx. 3000 people)
In total, there are 22 IDP Camps along with over 100,000 refugees. All the camps are Bengali camps only. The international community is unsatisfied with the Bengali camps problem which is not resolved yet even five years later of the conflict, whereas the entire Rakhine camps problem was solved. Here, it was not because of racial discrimination, but because Rakhine refugees has no citizenship problem at all.

The second reason is the citizenship problem for over one million Bengali Muslims. Bengalis possess no national registration card after the cancellation of white cards granted to them prior to the 2010 general election. Therefore, Bengalis from some townships like Buthidaung and Maungdaw, are no longer allowed to travel to other parts of Myanmar except for their respective townships. In Sittwe township, hundred thousands of Bengalis from IDP camps and villages, located along the Bu May and Thel Chaung area, the western part of Sittwe are not allowed to come to Sittwe City. Moreover, even in Sittwe City, Bengalis from Aungmingalar quarter located in Minbargyi Road are not allowed to access downtown area. The security personnel are assigned to watch their movement. But, when necessary for them to go to downtown area, they are allowed to visit there along with police escort. Apart from Buthidaung and Maungdaw, the access to respective downtown area is not allowed to Bengalis residing in other townships, including Sittwe. In addition, when the Bengalis from Rakhine state try to enter the main land area of the country via Ann or Taung Gote valley, they are arrested by Government authorities by determining them as illegal migrants as most of the Bengalis in Rakhine State do not have National Registration Cards.

Such situation has been happening for five years, starting from 2012- Rakhine State riot. Under such circumstances, the views of human rights violation and danger of ethnic cleansing against the Bengalis in Rakhine state overwhelmed the international community.
and as a result, not only the Bengali refugees (over one hundred thousand) from 22 IDP camps but also all the Bengalis in Rakhine state are regarded as the people suffering from human rights violation, and various aids and assistances provided by UN and International organizations were poured into Bengalis.

**UN and Non-governmental Organizations in Rakhine state**

Some people may think that UN and Non-governmental Organizations in Rakhine state started providing aids and assistances to Bengalis, after the 2012-riot. In actual fact, it is not. They have already arrived in Rakhine even before 2012 for various reasons. The native Rakhine people assume that those organizations offer more aids to Bengalis rather than ethnic Rakhines. Therefore, in 2012-conflict, there were some attacks to some international organizations that are assumed by Rakhine people as they provided aids to Bengalis only.

After the 2012-conflict, the IDP camps appeared and the citizenship problem for Bengalis also emerged. Under these circumstances, the international criticisms raised and the assistances from UN and International NGOs started to flow to Bengalis in Rakhine state.

Following are the UN and Non-governmental Organizations which are currently operating in Rakhine state:

UN organizations stationed in Sittwe are as follows;

- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)
- International Organization of Migration,
- Office of United Nations Resident Coordinator
- UNICEF (United Nations Children Funds)
- UNDSS (United Nations Department of Safety and Security)
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)
- UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner of Refugee)
UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Service)
UNOCHA (United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)
UNPF (United Nations Population Fund)
WFP (World Food Programme)
WHO (World Health Organization)
ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross)

In this regard, there are 12 UN organizations and 1 International Red Cross Committee. Therefore, it can also be said that a small branch of UN Office based in the United States can be seen in Sittwe, Rakhine State.

International organizations stationed in Sittwe are as follows;

- ACTED
- ACF
- Action Contre La Faim
- BAJ (Bridge Asia Japan)
- CDN (Consotium Dutch NGO’s)
- CARE (Care Myanmar International)
- DRC (Danish Refugee Council)
- HD (Humanitarian Dialogue Centre)
- IRC (International Rescue Committee)
- LWF (Lutheran World Foundation)
- MA-UK
- MM (Mercy Malaysia)
- MSF (Medicines Sans Frontier, Holland)
- NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council)
- Oxfam
- Plan (Plan International)
- Relief international
- SCI (Save the Children International)
- SI (Solidarities International) (a total of 18 organizations)

There are 10 UN and International Non-governmental Organizations which have established offices in Maungtaw and they
are UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, ACF, BAJ, CARE, CSFI, ICRC, MSF and Malteser. They are currently being operated by 1,059 people. Among them, 25 people are foreigners and the rest 1,034 are locally-recruited persons.

In Buthidaung, there are 5 International Non-governmental Organizations which are MHDO, CARE, ACF, Malteser and CDN. They are currently being run by 319 people. Among them, 7 people are foreigners and the rest 312 are locally-recruited persons.

Some of the INGOs, stationed in Buthidaung and Maungdaw, have also established their offices in Sittwe. However, some organizations, like CSFI, Maltesen and MHDO, directly based in Buthidaung and Maungdaw without establishing any other office in Sittwe. It was said that some INGOs offices based in Sittwe were attacked during the 2012-riot and after that, they no longer open their offices in Sittwe and instead, they moved to Buthidaung and Maungdaw. (Above-stated statistics were compiled in December 2016)

The above-mentioned UN offices and INGOs based in Sittwe, Maungdaw and Buthidaung are currently providing aids and assistances mainly to Bengalis. It was also found out that they are supporting not only to the Bengalis refugees from IDP Camps but also to every Bengali in Rakhine State. They provide food, medicines and clothing. Starting from 2012, 6000 to 10000 tons of rice per year were provided to Bengalis, through the WFP program.

Actually, there are also over 100,000 refugees in Kachin state, who have fled from their villages since 2011. However, it is so surprising to learn that over 100,000 Bengali refugees from Rakhine state received more aids and assistances from UN and INGOs than refugees in Kachin state, even though Bengalis have fled from their original places just in 2012. Therefore, it can be said that there may be some particular reason behind these differential supporting, rather than ordinary humanitarian assistance.
Unavoidable Problem

Especially, it had been five years already since Bengalis have been kept in IDP Camps and their movements have been restricted for security reasons since 2012. It is undeniable that the Bengali issue is necessary to be resolved. The important thing is to find out how this issue can be resolved. Moreover, the current situation has been happening for five years and it, therefore, should be resolved in a prompt manner. It is also needed to know that if it takes longer time to be resolved, the issue would be much more difficult to be resolved and it may explode at any time.

In resolving the Bengali issue in Rakhine state, the foremost and fundamental thing to be properly resolved is “citizenship” in line with existing laws and regulations.

Citizenship

Each and every country has its own right to promulgate the laws and regulations for the citizenship. In fact, this is the equal right for every country, including the countries where democracy and human rights are well-flourished and ahead of others. To acquire the citizenship of a particular country, it is mandatory for a person to submit the necessary documents and pass the process of necessary verification. Any ethnic people in Myanmar, Rakhine, Karen, Shan, Kachin or Bamar, is required to submit the necessary documents and it is the process that everyone has to pass.

As regards the Bengali issue, the nationality verification for the Bengalis is not denied by the Government of Myanmar. The Bengalis did not show any willingness to cooperate with the Government of Myanmar since 2014-Census. Moreover, although the Government of Myanmar welcomed the application of citizenship for them, only a few Bengalis came and applied, but not most. It can be assumed as most of them do not possess necessary documents for citizenship application. Until now, there are only 2,000 Bengalis that can be recognized as citizens. The Government attempted to
implement the verification process in Bengali camps in 2012 and 2013, respectively. However, the implementations were called off as the Bengalis denied the verification process and tried to attack by forming a mob.

Under such circumstance, the international organizations, including UN, did not recognize nor support the permission and efforts of the Government of Myanmar for citizenship application in accordance with existing laws and regulations. A couple of questions that can be raised are “Why don’t UN and International organizations recognise the same, as requirement to resolve the issue in line with laws and regulations and encourage to do so?” and “Is there any country in the world that grants the citizenship to those who do not have any evidence or document about him/herself?”

For those who do not have any document or evidence for citizenship application at present, the facts like how to solve their problem by granting a particular status to them and what should be considered for the status, should be properly considered if it is compulsory to think about citizenship for them. However, denying the priority to basically resolve the issue and approaching the Bengali Conflict in Rakhine as Second Kosovo Conflict by crying out the words like “Bengalis in Rakhine are persecuted, they are urgently in need of protection and shelter, the investigation should be carried out to ensure their safety, even more, a safe zone should be created for Bengalis,” which are too far from on-ground situation and it can be regarded as attempting to deviate the problem solving process. It is needed to review from comprehensive perspectives that who really are in dangerous and dire situation.

**Safe Zone**

Concerning the word “safe zone”, it is necessary to practically examine the on-ground situations to learn if who truly are in need of safety. Firstly, it is needed to analyse the on-ground situation of Maungdaw District, where most of Bengali Muslims in Rakhine are
currently residing. In fact, although it surely is a problem that cannot be avoided, it is not also a sort of the problem that should be resolved with detour.

Maungdaw District

Maungdaw District, which is often known as the western door of Myanmar, is located at the northwestern part of Rakhine State. In the past, it was just a township status and it has now been changed to the District level. The District contains Maungdaw Township and Buthidaung Township, and also the sub-township of Taungpyo(Left) which is situated near Bangladesh and just 38 miles away from Maungdaw town. The sub-township of Taungpyo(Left) is an extension from Maungdaw Township. In addition, Khamaungseik and Myinloot, located 30 miles and 20 miles away from Maungdaw, are in the process to be modified as new towns, respectively.

Maungdaw Township

In the eastern part of Maungdaw Township, there exists the Mayu mountain range. In the upper region of the western part of Maungdaw, there flows Naaf river which divides Myanmar and Bangladesh. And, there is Bay of Bengal in the lower part. Approximately 20 creeks including Maungdaw creek, Kyein creek, and Pyuuma creek, originated from Mayu mountain range directly flows into the Naaf river and Bay of Bengal. Therefore, Maungdaw township is located on the wide plain which can literally be called as the Naaf river valley region.

In the upper part of Alal Thankyaw (situated 12 miles away from southern part of Maungdaw) at which Mayu river flows into the Bay of Bengal, there exists the wider Naaf river valley between Naaf river and Mayu mountain range. Moreover, in the lower part of Alal Thankyaw, the place where Bay of Bengal and Mayu mountain range end, the plain gradually goes narrow and therefore, it can be considered
as there are wider grounds for farming in the northern part of Maungdaw, rather than in the southern part.

According to the current district formation, Rathedaung township includes Thawun creek (the western part of Mayu mountain range) which is located 12 miles from A Ngu Maw. Therefore, it can be assumed as Maungdaw township is bounded approximately 24 miles by Bay of Bengal from the point where Thawun creek flows to Naaf river. And also, it is extended some 60 miles from the point where Naaf river flows into the Bay of Bengal to the north where Taungpyo (Left) is located.

Thus, in Maungdaw Township, there are approximately 73,660 square miles of land in Naaf river valley which is favorable for farming, and also approximately 85 miles of water connected with Naaf river and Bay of Bengal, which is suitable to make living with fishery. Subsequently, it is also so beneficial for maritime trading including smuggling with Bangladesh and India, apart from natural economy.

**Buthidaung Township**

Buthidaung Township is one of the townships in Maungdaw district. It can be regarded as the upper part of Mayu river valley as it is situated between western part of Mayu mountain range and eastern part of Sai Tin mountain range. And also, it is located along the Pan Zin creek and Sai Tin creek in the upper part of Mayu river where the two mountain ranges meet in the north. Although upper part of the Buthidaung township is covered with thick forests, lower part has plains.

In the southern part of Buthidaung township, there are approximately 78,000 acres of land favorable for farming and gardening. There are huge bamboo forests along the northern part of Sai Tin mountain range. For fishery and other related enterprises, there are Mayu river, Pan Zin creek and Sai Tin creek.
Basic Socio-economy of Maungdaw District

According to the long history and different approaches, the emergence of the Maungdaw region should be discussed later and instead, the current on-ground situation will be emphasized and reviewed here.

Presently, Maungdaw Township comprises 1 sub-district, 2 new towns and 364 villages. The ethnic people residing in Maungdaw are the ones recognized as the local ethnic people, undoubtedly. The major ethnic people in Maungdaw are Rakhine, Daingnet and Mro. There are also Khami, Maramagyí and Kaman who are the minorities in the township. They all have the right to possess National Registration Cards. In addition, some Hindus also dwell in Maungdaw and they also have NRCs. According to the statistics of September 2016, there are 3,000 people residing in Maungdaw district.

Actually, the ethnic people, who are undoubtedly recognized as the local people, are not the majority of population in Maungdaw. Instead, the Bengali Muslims who keep demanding to be recognized themselves as Rohingya ethnicity are the majority in the area. Before 2010, the white cards have been issued to 300,000 Bengalis in Maungdaw and according to the updated statistics taken in December 2016, it is estimated that there are 490,000 Bengalis in Maungdaw township, Taungpyo (Left) sub-township, Khamungseik new town and Myinloot new towns. Some of the local people assume that there may be more Bengalis than that statistics.

There are totally 364 villages in Maungdaw township and among them, 272 villages are the Bengalis villages and the local ethnic people such as Rakhine, Mro, Daingnet, Thet, and Khami, are residing in 85 villages only. There are also 7 villages where Bengalis and ethnic people are dwelling together. Moreover, as for the villages of local ethnic people, most of them are small villages with 20 to 40 households and there are only four villages which include 100 to 200 households.
However, most of the Bengali villages include hundreds of households and there are also large villages with thousands of households.

The reason for the current existence of 85 Rakhine ethnic villages in Maungdaw Township is that there are 20 to 30 villages founded by the assistance of the Ministry of Border Areas and National Races in 2000 as Na Ta La villages (Na Ta La is the abbreviation of the aforementioned Ministry) and some villages which are founded with the intention to resettle the Rakhine ethnic groups who have fled from Bangladesh as their villages were burnt due to the ethnic conflicts with Bengalis.

Regarding the ownership of farming area, most of the lands are dominated by Bengalis. In Kyein Chaung village which is located in the northern part of Maungdaw, there are 1,000 Bengali households and 40 Rakhine ethnic households. No one out of those 40 households owns land for farming. Moreover, in Laungdon village, which is located near Nga Khu Ya village, with 96 households, there are only two households that possess farms; one with 25 acres and the other with 10 acres, respectively. The remaining 94 households do not possess any farm. Similarly, very few people from Na Ta La villages own land for farming. No people from Aung Ba La village, located near the Bengali village, namely Shwe Zar, and Maungdaw creek, owns any farm at all.

Therefore, it can be estimated that only one percent out of 70,000 acres of farms in Maungdaw Township is owned by Rakhine ethnic people. In addition, the Bengalis have also overwhelmed the fishery sector of the area as there are large Bengali villages, namely Ko Tan Kaut and A Lal Than Kyaw, located along the coastal line of Bay of Bengal and Naaf river in Maungdaw Township. So, most of the Rakhine ethnic people in Maungdaw township currently make their living by taking up any jobs that come by.

According to the demographic survey taken in December 2016, it is learned that there are 45,000 Rakhine ethnic people and 250,000 Bengali Muslims in Buthidaung Township, with 159 Rakhine
villages, 175 Bengali villages and 5 villages where Rakhine and Bengalis are residing together. For the ownership of farming area, there are 20,913 acres of lands owned by 4940 Rakhine households and 57,192 acres of lands owned by 21,433 Bengali households. Therefore, it can be assumed that Rakhine ethnic people in Buthidaung Township own a bit more farming area, compared with those in Maungdaw Township.

Therefore, the population in the whole area of Maungdaw can be briefly analyzed as; Rakhine (44,569), Khami (7,572), Daingnet (8,487), Mro (8,213), Thet (2,010), Mrama (333), Bamar (2,464), Karen (20), Chin (141), Hindu (5,170), Other (276), Bengali Muslims (755,371). It is found out that, in the whole district, the population density of Bengali people is ten times higher than that of Rakhine ethnic people.

According to the above-mentioned statistics, it can be seen that Bengalis own more farming area than ethnic people and control the important area of fishery in the Maungdaw district. In contrast with the Buthidaung township where the population and ownership of farms is fairly adjusted, the influence of Bengalis can be seen more in the Maungdaw township. Even in the central market of Maungdaw, there are only three clothing shops run by Rakhine ethnic people. There is no shop in Kyeinchaung market of Maungdaw district which is run by Rakhine people.

In terms of religious point of view, there are 222 Buddhist Monasteries, 330 Monks, 155 Novices, and 17 Nuns in the Maungdaw district, whereas there are 1,318 Muslim moulvis, 1,320 Mosques and 1,158 Arabic School. Moreover, 17 Hindu temples and 7 Churches can also be found in the area.

On-ground Situation
Although the movements of Bengalis are restricted due to the lack of NRC Cards, they can freely access to Bangladesh via the border along the Naaf river where no barrier are kept. Moreover, it is also informed that the boats from the Bengalis villages located in the coast of Bay of Bengal like A Lal Than Gyaw, regularly run to and from Bangladesh. In such a way, they can directly trade with Bangladesh.

Apart from that, they also make connection with the Bengalis of Buthidaung and Maungdaw origins, who are currently residing in Yangon and trade with them. Therefore, they are not in the position of subordinates depending on Rakhine people, whose movement are not restricted, and the same at trading as well. The Bengali Muslims in Maungdaw directly communicate with their relatives in Yangon for commercial purposes.

The authorities concerned of administration do not effectively administer the Bengali villages in accordance with the existing rules and regulations, with a view to avoiding the unwanted problems. Therefore, the Mosques were built without permission. What the administrative authorities can do is to record illegal Mosques. According to the records of the government, more than 1,000 Mosques in Maungdaw district are found out as illegally-built ones.

In most Bengali villages in Maungdaw district, the Bengalis built more and more houses for them. Among them, most of the houses are built in the farming area. Some Bengalis even built the houses in the new area near the villages. But the authorities concerned could not take necessary actions against them. Subsequently, there will be more new Bengali villages in coming years.

In addition, the Bengalis whose movements are restricted due to the lack of NRC are supported with various aid and assistance by UN and INGO, regarded as refugees and poverty-stricken people. There are 15 Offices of UN and INGO in Maungdaw district and all of them support Bengalis only. Actually, there is no Bengali IDP Camp in Maungdaw district. However, they keep supporting the Bengalis in Maungdaw with food, medicine, aids for education, health and
agriculture, and assistances to build the roads to connect the villages. Although the exact amount of aids and assistance of these UN and INGO is not known yet, it is estimated that it may be millions of US Dollars.

However, ethnic Rakhine people do not receive those aids and assistances from UN and INGOs. In 2012-conflict, the Rakhine villages and Buddhist Monasteries in Maungdaw district were torched and destroyed. The villages near Maungdaw, namely Waithali, Shweyin Aye, Bawdigone, Khayay Myaing, Kinchaung, Shwebaho, Thayay Konbaung, Kainggyi, Mawy Wadi, and Udaung, (total- 10 villages) are also burnt and destroyed. However, just small portion of aids from UN and INGO is poured into those villages and it is the government administration that mainly helped the recovery of the villages. No Bengali village in Maungdaw district is destroyed during the 2012-conflict.

The Rakhine people, who actually are the victims of the conflict and also the minority of the district, are facing difficult challenges in their daily socio-economic lives. They do not own as much as farming area as Bengali and they have to take up any job that comes by to struggle for their survival. After 2012-conflict, they suffered more and more. As the Naaf river and coastal area in Maungdaw is dominated by Bengali Muslims villages, it is very difficult for the Rakhine people to making living with fishery. They dare not even find the fish for a bowl of curry. Besides, they have no courage to access Mayu mountain range to gather firewood in group of one or two. As a result, Bengalis monopolise the mass production (estimated hundred thousand) of bamboo from the huge bamboo forest located in the northern part of Sai Tin mountain range.

Especially, after 2012-conflict, the fear among Rakhine people spread following murder cases of some ethnic people by unknown people in the forest or near the river. Moreover, some farms belonging to Rakhine people are located between the farms of Bengali and therefore, they dare not go there. The security personnel too cannot conduct security coverage for all areas of river, forest and farms.
At the same time, most Rakhine people in Maungdaw township are poor, take up any job that comes by, and they cannot educate their children properly. It is difficult for them to send their children to school. About 400 ethnic Rakhine students are studying in Nathataung welfare schools near Taungpyo (Left), northern part of Maungdaw township. As for Bengali children, they get assistance such as books and uniforms from UN and INGOs whereas Rakhine children have to survive with little amount of welfare assistances.

Bengalis are majority in Maungdaw district. The Bengali villages with thousands of households are located around the villages of ethnic people with hundred households. Rakhine villages fall within the jurisdiction of the administrative authority of the government. They will be taken action if they built houses in farming area. They need to submit for the prior approval if they want to hold a public lecture on Rakhine traditional literature and Culture. However, the administrative authority of the government could not influence Bengali villages. Action will not be taken against Bengalis if they built houses in farming area. Although illegal Mosque establishment is prohibited, they can freely pray at over 1,000 Mosques. The public lectures and meetings in Bengali villages are held without any hindrance from the administrative authority. Therefore, the Bengalis in Maungdaw area gain particular independence to some extent.

After a particular Bengali Muslim armed group attacked the government’s security outposts in the end of 2016, the anxiety spread between Rakhine ethnic people and Bengali Muslims in Maungdaw district. The church where Khami ethnic people go to pray in Kyein Chaung village, located in the northern part of Kyee Kan Pyin where No.1 Border Guard Police Headquarter is based, cannot be reopened till to date. Also, since Kyaukpandu Hindu temple on the coast of Bay of Bengal, Southernmost part of Maungdaw, was threatened, Hindu people fled away, leaving behind only one guard for the temple. The annual Hindu ritual ceremony cannot be held since then.

How shall we see it?
As for the Bengali Crisis in Rakhine State, some people around the world seem to be focused only on the attack on Bengalis in Southern Rakhine State during the 2012 conflicts. The attack on Rakhine ethnic people in Northern Rakhine State is usually left behind. In fact, the majority 75% of Bengali in Rakhine State is residing in Maungdaw district, there are only 25% in Southern Rakhine.

Therefore, in Maungdaw district in which Bengalis reside most, most of the farms and agriculture sector is dominated by Bengalis. Fishery sector along the Naaf River and Bay of Bengal is influenced by them also. It can also be seen that the mass production of bamboo (nearly 10,000,000 kyats per year) from northeastern part of Buthidaung is monopolized by Bengalis. Even though their movements are restricted due to the lack of NRC, they can directly trade with Bangladesh and Yangon. They receive aids from UN and INGO which includes food, medicine and assistances for various sectors like Education, Social, Agriculture and Transportation. In addition, the government administrative authority is less effective on Bengali villages to avoid unwanted problems. The Bengalis have full confident to access farms, forests, river and sea as their group is quite big. And, even if the conflict happened, there shall be no casualty on Bengali villages as they are the majority and they do not need to worry about it.

The above-mentioned facts are quite contrast to the Rakhine people, the minority in Maungdaw. They own less farming area than Bengalis. They cannot make their living with fishery in Naaf river and Bay of Bengal in Maungdaw township. They cannot go to mountain ranges in northeastern part of Buthidaung to cut bamboo for selling. Although their movement is not restricted because of NRC, the Bengalis refused to trade with Rakhine people, apart from compulsory cases, after 2012 conflict. They do not receive aids from financially powerful teams like UN and INGOs. Small amount of aids, like Nathataung welfare school, from some donors and welfare activists is received. There is a small team in Maungdaw, namely ARG (aka) Arakan Rakhita Group (Rakhine Race Protection Team), which is run
by the funds donated by the Rakhine people in Japan. The group supports agricultural sector of Rakhine people. But, their finance is not that strong and as their group name includes “race protection”, they do not receive support from local government authority with the view to avoid racial or religious conflict. The government administrative authority is fully effective on Rakhine villages. They have fear or anxiety for the loss of their household if the conflict happens and it actually had happened.

Therefore, if the minority Bengali in Southern part of Rakhine State is sympathized, the similar reaction should be sought to consider the problems being faced by the minority Rakhine people in Northern part of Rakhine State. Moreover, the Rakhine people are facing not only the above-mentioned problems, but also the danger of being attacked by so-called Mujahiddins, commencing from the end of 2016.

That is why, considering the need of safe zone for Bengalis is one-sided consideration, without focusing on both sides of the conflict. Even in the one-sided consideration, the situation of the minority is neglected and that of the majority is emphasized. Such kind of approach cannot be applicable in solving the problem. In reality, the anxiety is felt by both sides and it should be considered objectively and equally.

Basically, the problem regarding the citizenship in accordance with the existing laws should be resolved first, in order to rightly resolve the problem in Rakhine State. Trying to evade the problem or leaving it behind may lead the problem into more difficult situation. The most important thing is the citizenship along with the abiding by the administrative rules and regulations under the jurisdiction of the nation. This is the important factor which is well known by others as the sovereignty of a nation.

Citizenship and so-called Rohingya
The current issue being faced on citizenship is the name of the ethnicity. Bengali Muslims called themselves as Rohingya. This terminology has been controversy for over sixty years.

The earliest written form of the terminology “Rohingya” was found on the Guardian Newspaper published on 28 August 1951. Dr. Aye Chan, the Rakhine historian scholar, pointed out that it was documented in the article written by Abdul Gaffar, Member of the Constituent Assembly of Myanmar from Buthidaung. Abdul Gaffar is a Chittagonian and graduated from Dhaka University. He also served as a District Inspector of Schools (DIS) during the British colonial rule. According to him, Muslims from Buthidaung and Maungdaw are the descendants of the Arab merchants who had settled down there between 7th–9th centuries AD and are not related to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They were the Arab merchants and military personnel in search of new land and the local chieftains at that time recognized them. Besides, it was also said that they have initiated the earliest Muslim settlements in the Rakhine region since 7th Century AD and Buddhism spread in Myanmar only in the reign of King Anawrahta in AD 1044. Starting from such written by him, the usage of “Rakhine Muslim” and “Rohingya” is widely spread by the educated Muslim youths.

Along with such movement, the Rohingya organizations were founded, including Rohingya Solidarity Association in 1956 and Rohingya Youth Associations in 1959 respectively, and the branches were opened in Maungdaw and Buthidaung area. In 1960, four other Rohingya organizations were emerged as follows:

1. Rohingya Students Association
2. Rohingya Workers Association
3. Rohingya University Students Association
4. Rohingya Jamiat-e-Ulema

Amongst them, the organizations from No. 1, 2 and 3 are based in Yangon and No.4 has founded several branches in Yangon, Maungdaw and Buthidaung.
It was found out that the “Rohingya” term was accepted and used by some leaders of Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League and Brigadier-General (Rtd) Aung Gyi. It was also learnt that the term was allowed to fill in the space of National Race in the National Registration Cards with three-folds which were issued at that time and the Rohingya programme was broadcast by Myanma Radio in the time of Clean AFPFL Party Government. However, the broadcasting programme was stopped and the Rohingya Organizations were banned along with other parties and organizations after the 1962 Coup d’état orchestrated by General Ne Win. Since then, the term “Rohingya” was no longer used by both Government and the Tatmadaw (Armed Forces) of Myanmar.

However, the activists for Bengali affairs from Rakhine State and abroad are now widely using this term.

The Settlement of Bengali Muslims in Rakhine State

When the history of so-called Rohingya was firstly introduced, the Rakhine historians and politicians did not accept and strongly objected it. They mentioned that it is not acceptable according to the authentic historical evidence.

Authentic and significant historical evidences of Rakhine such as stone inscription of King Anandachandra, Danyawady ancient city, Waithali ancient city and coins of Waithali era suggested that the Buddhism culture was widely flourished in Rakhine between 7th Century AD and 10th Century AD and Hindu Culture also spread along with it, there. There was no record or evidence of the arrival of Islam in Waithali era at all. Even in contemporary historical records of India, the spread of Islam was halted at the western bank of India between 7th Century AD and 10th Century AD. It did not even arrive at the eastern part of India (Present day- Bangladesh) that shared the border with Rakhine. It therefore appeared that the so-called Rohingya claimed themselves as direct descendants from Arab, not-related to India or
Bangladesh. However, there was no concrete evidence for such claim of them as well.

According to the clear and concrete historical evidence in Rakhine State, it can be divided into three main parts for the Muslims settlement in Rakhine State.

The first Muslims settlement in Rakhine was initiated with the conquest of Bengal Chittagong by Rakhine King Min Bargyi in Mrauk Oo era in AD 1531. The Conqueror King Min Bargyi captured 4,000 Muslims who were the salt makers from Sandwip island and he ordered them to settle in three Pagodas at Thandwe as the pagoda-servants, to keep the Pagodas maintained every day. So, they were recorded as the first Muslims settlers in Rakhine as concrete historical evidence.

In the reign of King Min Razagyi, the grandson of Min Bargyi, his own son Min Khamaung revolted against him by recruiting those Muslims from Thandwe in his army. When the revolution was soundly defeated, about 3,700 Muslims fled to Myay Du, the territory of Bamar King. When Bamar King Bodawpaya launched attack on Rakhine in 1784, he recruited those Muslims from Myay Du as a troop/regiment and resettled them in Thandwe once again. So, they are known as Myay Du Muslims and although their religion is Islam, they spoke Burmese language and wore Burmese outfits.

The second Muslim settlers are the persons seeking asylum after being defeated in Mughal war of succession. In AD 1657, when Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan fell ill, a struggle for the throne started between his four sons - Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad Baksh. Among them, Aurangzeb emerged victorious and Shah Shuja, along with 200 followers, fled to Rakhine and sought asylum under the King of Mrauk U (AD 1652-1684). As his followers are the Persian archers of Afghan descendants, the name “Kaman” which comes from Persian, meaning "bow", was given to them. As those Kaman involved in the political machinations of the Rakhine kingdom, King Sanda Wizaya (AD 1710-1731) banished most of the Kaman to
Ramree Island (Yanbye Island) and later transported them to Thandwe. According to the statistics of British rule in AD 1911, the total population of Myay Du and Kaman in Thandwe was 3,576. Kaman speak Rakhine language and the clothes and ornaments they wear are similar to that of Rakhine people.

According to the records, it was found out that, during Mrauk U era, the powerful Rakhine Kings launched attacks and conquered Chittagong and they enslaved the captured prisoners of war and also traded the slaves with Portugese Merchants. There were nine Rakhine Kings from Mrauk U era in total who could successfully subjugated Bengal Chittagong. During their reigns, they minted the coins with Arabic language and it can be assumed that those coins might have been used, as the token of their victory, in the Bengal region where they have conquered. So, during the Mrauk U era, the Muslims settlement occurred when Muslims were captured and brought by the conqueror Kings of Rakhine.

The third massive Muslim influx in Rakhine happened after the British’s annexation in 1825.

The Muslims settlement in British Colonial Period

Starting from the British annexation of Rakhine in 1825, both Hindus and Muslims from India Continent participated as parts of the British Administration in their capacities as soldiers and servants. When British rule was started, the population in Rakhine is very small. After the King of Ava conquered Rakhine, most Rakhine people fled to India, which was ruled by British at that time, and as a result, the population was tremendously decreased. It was said that after British annexed Rakhine, the Rakhine people who had fled returned to Rakhine and resettled in their places of origin.

The historians documented that Myanmar was ushered in a new period of economic growth starting from 1871, after the Suez Canal was opened in 1869. After British had captured not only Rakhine, but also the lower part of Myanmar, they made thousands of
Indian labours migrated to Rakhine state, delta region and Bago region, to increase the production of rice so that they could export to the West. They brought Muslims into Rakhine both by water route and land route of Taung Pyo Letwe-Maungdaw-Buthidaung. Even a railway was constructed between Buthidaung and Maungdaw to ensure the smooth transportation at that time.

After the Muslim-Bamar riot which broke out in Yangon in 1938, the British Governor set up an Inquiry Committee to investigate it. The Committee suggested that the labour migration from India should be limited and land policy should be reformed. Then, British again set up the Inquiry Commission, led by James Baxter, an Economic Expert, with the recommendation of the Committee. The British Government asked the Commission to investigate the Indian migrants in Myanmar.

The Commission was chaired by Mr. James Baxter (who later became the Consultant of British Governor in Myanmar) and the members were ICS U Tin Htut and Mr. R. Desai. According to the report of the Commission, the situation of Indians migrated to Rakhine could obviously be seen.

In page 49, Chapter 7 of the Report, it had mentioned the list of Indians migrated to Rakhine with reference to the 1930 Census and it was described as follows;

- Population in Rakhine: 1,108,538
- Population of Indians: 217,801

It was also stated that the population of Indians who were widely spread in the districts as follows:

- Sittwe District: 210,990 (Maungdaw and Buthidaung were inclusive in that district)
- Rakhine mountain region: 500
- Kyaukphyu District: 4321
- Thandwe District: 1990
Hence, according to the 1930 Census, the population of Indians in Rakhine is less than 20%.

At that time, there were 637,580 people in Sittwe District and 210,990 people were Indians (they were 97% of all Indians in Rakhine). Among them, 44,000 people were native Indians and the number of people who were born in Rakhine was 16,700. Some people came from India to Rakhine to work at agriculture sector in the working hours only at first, and later, they did not go back and settled down in Rakhine. Maungdaw and Buthidaung were inclusive in the Sittwe district in that period.

The races of Indians who were spread in Sittwe district were divided and described as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chittagonian</td>
<td>186,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali (Not from Chittagong)</td>
<td>10,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>2,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uriya</td>
<td>3,809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the report of the Executive Inspector of Public Health Department in 1930, about 400,000 Chittagonian labours migrated into Rakhine annually and there were 251,945 Indians in Sittwe district when the 1931 Census was taken. In 1934, about 20,000 Chittagonians migrated into Rakhine state. The Inquiry Commission submitted its assessment that the continuous migration of Chittagonians should be stopped in time lest it can lead to the racial conflicts in the future.

The report of James Baxter in British Colonial Rule can be regarded as the concrete evidence of the migration of Indians into Rakhine State. According to the list, under the name of Indians, there were less Hindus and the majorities are Chittagonian Muslim Bengalis. Besides, the native Chittagonians in Bengal region illegally enter and settle in Maungdaw district as it is located very close to the border. So, it can be obviously seen through the report that massive Bengalis
Muslims from Chittagong region were migrated to Rakhine without any hindrance as the British sought only for their own benefits.

Following the act to make separation or integration for Myanmar and India (Khwe yay-Twel Yay Act) had emerged in 1935, as per the decision to get Myanmar separated from India, Myanmar Prime Minister Galon U Saw and Indian Leader Sarkar signed a contract as regards immigration. A huge number of Indian people entered Myanmar at that time, worrying that their entry into Myanmar would be denied after the separation is confirmed. As per those facts and figures, it was found out that starting from the British Annexation of Rakhine, and before the separation is approved in 1935-1937, Rakhine state was part of India under the British colony and many Indians could entered Rakhine without any hindrance.

In actual fact, the term “Rohingya” is never documented in the list of ethnic races, both in the report of James Baxter and the Official Gazette of British people who are renowned for their custom of very meticulous recording and have ruled Rakhine for 123 years, from 1825 to 1948. In their records, only Indians, Chittagonians, Bengalis, and Hindus, who were migrated from India, were stated.

Brigadier General C. E. Lucas Phillips of No. 14 Battalion of British Army said that, “The place of origin of Muslims is the Chittagong district of Bengal region of British India. Be that as it may, whether they had stayed in Rakhine for generations or they migrated recently, all of them were known as “Chittagonians” and in the British army, they were known as Chittagonian Forces (CFs).”

So, even though it could be said that the historical evidences in the era of Rakhine City States, such as Danyawady, Waithali, Lemro and Mrauk U, were not fully documented, the term “Rohingya” was not found even in the well-recorded documents of British people, too. Therefore, it can be regarded as the term “Rohingya” has just loomed up in the Post-Independence period of Myanmar. Muslims in Rakhine are called by local Rakhine and Bamar people as “Muslim Kalars”. However, since there were some objections towards that name, the
term has been changed to “Bengali Muslims”, being used for official purpose. It was found in the British records as Chittagonian Muslims in Rakhine or Chittagognians.

1942 Rakhine-Bengali Conflict

Although the report of James Baxter has been released, the recommendations were not implemented due to the outbreak of Second World War. Furthermore, the British lost its trust in local ethnic people of Myanmar who revolted against them in cooperation with Japanese forces. So, when British retreated from Rakhine, they armed Chittagong Muslims as part of the 'stay-behind' strategy to impede the Japanese advance. (The Chittagonian Forces are known by the Rakhine people as Rajaput Forces.) The Chittagonian Forces mainly relied on the Chittagong Muslims migrated to Rakhine and the British also raised them as hardcore informants. The historians assumed that such moves of arming Bengalis in Rakhine State to the benefit of British in Second World War and forming forces was the harbinger of the 1942 Rakhine-Bengali Conflict. The demand of Bengalis to establish Muslim State in Rakhine was the following factor of the verbal promise made by the British in honour of the loyalty showed by the Bengalis in the Second World War. So, the current Bengali Muslims Crisis in Rakhine can be regarded as the vile inheritance of colonial era.

During the Second World War in 1942, after the Japanese Air Forces dropped bombs over Sittwe and civil administration completely collapsed, the Rakhine-Bengali Conflict erupted as a result of the anarchic inter-communal violence in respective townships. The 1942 conflict was ignited when the Rakhine village chief and his brother were brutally murdered by a group of Bengalis in Yat Chaung village in Myay Pon township, and reciprocally, a group of Rakhine people, led by Thein Kyaw Aung and Kyaw Ya, torched the Yat Chaung Bengali village. Then, the conflict was spread to the whole Rakhine state.
Starting from Myay Pon Township, the riots continued in the townships, namely Pauk Taw, Min Pya, Sittwe, Mrauk U, Kyauk Taw and so on. The civil administration is totally devastated in the time of British retreat and Japanese occupation, and several regional leaders ruled on their own in different areas. Although Rakhine ethnic leaders, in collaboration with the Burma Independence Army which started to enter Rakhine in the meantime, tried to stabilize the region, it was to no avail.

The Bengalis who fled Sittwe, Pauk Taw and Mrauk U gained the status of majority when they arrived Buthidaung and Maungdaw, and started to torch and destroy the villages of Rakhine ethnic people. Regarding the magnitude of extremism and cruelty between both parties, it was mentioned in the records of Bon Pauk Thar Kyaw, Rakhine Politician, and Antony Irwin, Liaison Officer of the Intelligence Unit of British Army, that there were some Rakhine people who were proudly saying, “I alone have murdered 200 Muslims, I have murdered 300 Muslims with my own hands” and so also there were some Bengali Muslims who were proudly saying, “I have murdered 200 Rakhines by myself; 300 Rakhines were murdered by my hands.”

Although some Bengali villages in Mrauk U and Myay Pon were torched, the villages that actually suffered the huge damage were the Rakhine villages in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. Total number of 217 Rakhine villages were burnt down to ash in Buthidaung township and all 129 Rakhine villages in Maungdaw township were burnt and destroyed. The civilian casualty during that conflict is estimated as 20000-50000 people.

After the Second World War, most of the Bengali could resettle in their old places which were destroyed during the war. For instance, in Mrauk U Township, all 16 Bengali villages could successfully made resettlement. It is assumed that the British rule in the post war period could protect them from any harm.

In contrast, 98 out of 129 destroyed Rakhine villages in Maungdaw Township, and 116 out of 217 villages in Buthidaung
Township, could not be retrieved and resettled again. In addition, according to the written document of Maung Ba Bha Thein, a Rakhine historian, the Bengalis even settled in the destroyed Rakhine villages that cannot be recovered, including 61 villages in Buthidaung township. So, in 1942 riot, Rakhine people in Maungdaw and Buthidaung suffered fatality, loss of villages as well as farming areas. Their descendants moved to Kyauk Taw, Mrauk U, Rathedaung, Sittwe and even to Ramree Island.

In this context, even both parties suffered casualty and loss in the 1942 riot, the Chittagong Muslims (as per the British official usage), could resettle in their destroyed original villages whereas Most of the Rakhine villages in Maungdaw Township and Buthidaung Township could not be recovered. So, the descendants of the survivors and all Rakhine people felt more for the loss of their own territory and sovereignty rather than the loss of physical properties like villages and farmlands.

So, when focusing on the Rakhine-Bengali Crisis in Rakhine State, 1942 Rakhine-Bengali Conflict and the feeling of Rakhine people must also be taken into consideration, compulsorily.

**Rebellion of Bengali Muslims**

It can be said that the Bengali rebellion was born parallel to the 1942 Rakhine-Bengali conflict. Although Burma Independence Army could captured Buthidaung in the first quarter of 1942, Maungdaw was captured by Imperial Japanese Army in October 1942. So, during British's retreat and before Japanese's entry, all the Rakhine villages were destroyed in Rakhine-Bengali conflict. Meanwhile, Bengalis in Maungdaw established a Peace Committee, chaired by Ulmawmra, to seize the administrate authority of Maungdaw township. That Committee administered the northern part of Maungdaw while the southern part was controlled by a group, led by E D S Maratan.

Those groups also seized jurisdiction power and even set up an armed squad as well. The group was abolished when the Imperial
Japanese Forces entered in October 1942. However, the members tried to keep the group active as a religious association with the name of “Jamiat-Ulema”. As per some records, that religious association was established since 1936.

The political movement of such groups even aimed to claim the region which includes Naaf river valley, Mayu mountain ranges, Pan Zin river valley, Maungdaw and Buthidaung, as the Muslim State. In the pre-war period, while there were Independence Movement in India and Muslim State establishment movement by Pakistan. So, Muslims in Rakhine State even tried an attempt to have Buthidaung and Maungdaw seceded from the country and integrated into East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh). However, after the meeting of General Aung San of Myanmar and Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, Maungdaw region is recognized as the territory of Myanmar and the attempt of Bengalis went in vain. Then, the rebellion of Mujahiddins (the Jihadists), along with the movement to gain the status of Muslim State in Myanmar, arose in Maungdaw and Buthidaung again. Besides, Bengalis even said that it was the promise of the British during the war to have Muslim State established.

After the 1942 riot, the Jamiat-Ulema group founded 13 Arabic schools in Maungdaw to teach Urdu and Arabic language. These schools were politically supportive to establish Muslim State. In May 1947, a group of 2,700 insurgents, led by Zaffar Kawal, started Mujahiddin rebellion and stationed in Buthidaung Township. Soon after the rebellion started, Dudumyar, the Secretary of Jamiat-Ulema group based in Alal Thankyaw, Maungdaw Township, along with 300 armed insurgents, came and combined forces with Mujahids.

Similarly, the Mujahid insurgent group, led by Abul Huson, appeared in the middle part of Maungdaw and other Mujahid Party, led by Kassem, emerged in the southern part of Maungdaw. Their strength became remarkably strong. Starting from 1948, they launched several coordinated attacks to Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Several villages of Rakhine ethnic people in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung were severely destroyed by the Mujahid attacks.
The main demands of Mujahids were to have the region between Naaf river and Kalatan river claimed as the Muslim state, to be recognized themselves as the status of ethnic race with official name “Mujahid”, to learn Urdu as their official language.

The Union Government of Myanmar had faced with multicoloured insurgents in the post-independence period and did not have the chance to launch the operation against Mujahids properly. However, in November 1954, the Government launched several effective military operations against the Mujahideen, claiming lives of main leaders of Mujahids and capturing their bases. These operations reduced the influence of Mujahids and they were scattered as small factions, being active only in the border area. Due to the continuous military operations, 290 Mujahids disarmed and surrendered in southern part of Maungdaw on 4 July 1961 and the momentum of Mujahids' activities became weak. Some observers said that there might be the connection between the temporary establishment of Mayu Frontier District by Clean AFPFL Government and the termination of Mujahids' activities. However, after the 1962 Coup d’état by General Ne Win, the Mayu Frontier District was dissolved.

After the 1942 riot and Mujahid movement, the population of Rakhine ethnic people in Maungdaw and Buthidaung were obviously decreased and that of Bengali Muslims was tremendously increased, on the contrary. Although 98 Rakhine villages in Maungdaw Township could not be recovered and resettled, Bengalis could even extend new villages. Originally, there were 140 Bengali villages in Maungdaw and after that, there were 272 villages. Before 1942, there were 392 Rakhine villages and 42 Bengali villages in Buthidaung Township and after being destroyed during the riot, 116 out of 392 Rakhine villages were not recovered. Moreover, Bengalis also moved and settled in 61 villages of original place of Rakhine people and 47 new Bengali villages were expanded too in 2008. At the end of 2016, the total number of Bengali villages became 175. The ethnic people from the remaining Rakhine villages fled for their lives and as a consequence,
the big villages with over 300 households became small ones with just 40 to 50 households.

When the aforementioned Mujahid movement gained momentum, the conference, attended by Bengali Muslims from different areas of Rakhine, was held at Alal Thanyaw, Maungdaw Township in June 1951. Through the conference, the Bengalis sent an open letter in which stated their political demands to the leaders of Union Government of Myanmar. In the demands of Bengali Muslims, they described themselves as Arakan Muslims (Rakhine Muslims) and their demands were as follows:

- To get equal rights as Rakhine ethnic people
- To grant permission to establish Northern part of Rakhine as Muslim State
- To appoint a Muslim Minister at the cabinet of Union Government
- To practice the half-sharing system on each and every matter of Rakhine State as Rakhine 50% and Muslim 50%
- To use Urdu language in teaching all subjects at Basic Education Primary Schools and Middle Schools
- To avoid teaching other subjects to Muslims without consent, and so on.

In the statement of that Alal Thanyaw conference, their aim to establish Muslim State was vividly seen and they urged to recognise Muslims as ethnic people. However, it was found out that the term “Rohingya” was not even used at the Alal Thanyaw conference of Bengalis which was held in June 1951, and instead the term “Rakhine Muslims” was used.
Therefore, 1942 Rakhine-Bengali riot, Mujahid rebellion and Alal Thankyaw conference are the notable things to be considered in solving the Rakhine-Bengali issue.

2012 Rakhine-Bengali Riot

It is said that the 2012 Rakhine riot came after a gang rape and murder of a Rakhine girl, namely Ma Thidar Htwe, by Bengalis at Kyaukni Maw village, Ramree Township on 28 May 2012 and killing of ten Muslims as revenge by a group of people in Taung Gote on 3 June 2012. It is also said that the riot occurred due to the weak action of Government or due to a group of extremists who were keen to ignite the conflict. There were so many reasons for saying so. Actually, it is the result of leaving the Rakhine state without trying to rightly solve the Bengali problem which has been ground-rooted for several years. No matter how much the extremists were eager to kindle the conflict, it is of no use without any ground-rooted problem.

Then, the big Rakhine-Bengali riot arose once again as a second time, after 70 years of 1942 similar conflict which had claimed the lives of tens of thousands of innocent civilians. Besides, it now became the conflict which has seized the attention of the International community as well. It was also similar to a situation in which the patient is treated only after struggling with pain for a long time.

Following the days after Kyaukni Maw and Taung Gote incidents, the Bengalis started rioting soon after returning from Friday's prayers on 8 June 2012 at Maungdaw at where most of Bengali Muslims are residing. Thousands of Bengali Muslims, armed with swords and sticks, launched attacks at Rakhine houses and Buddhist religious buildings. However, such riot in Maungdaw cannot be regarded only as the result of Kyaukni Maw and Taung Gote incidents because it had happened like that in 1988, before such incidents occurred.

On 13 May 1988, about 50,000 Bengalis Muslims gathered a large mob and besieged Maungdaw at 1900 hours, while shouting the
slogans loudly. They even destroyed some houses and a Buddhist Monastery. The situation was quite difficult to be controlled by local police security force. During the siege of Bengalis, they cut off telecommunication lines and the police had to break the siege by a car and drove to nearest security outpost, which was situated 4 miles away, to get reinforcement. Soon after the reinforcement arrived, the situation was kept under control and the Bengalis dispersed before dawn. Such incident had happened while other parts in Rakhine state were stable at that time. It was assumed that the perpetrator behind that incident was Rohingya Solidarity Organization. There were some clarifications after the incident that it was happened due to the dissatisfaction towards the policemen. However, besieging the town by massive crowd at night cannot be regarded as the normal occurrence. Nevertheless, this incident could not seize the attention of local and abroad due to the political crisis of the country at that time, in 1988.

Therefore, the Maungdaw riot happened on 8 June 2012, was not an incident that suddenly appeared and the root cause of the conflict is due to the problem which has been ground-rooted for a long time and emerged under the favorable condition. During the riot, the houses, shops and monasteries in the town were destroyed and about 10 Rakhine villages in the southwestern part of Maungdaw were burnt down.

Again, on 9 June 2012, a riot happened in Sittwe and both parties torched and destroyed homes, quarters and villages of each other. The unstable situation continued until October. The riot erupted again in Kyauk Phyu on 22 October 2012 and the violence led to the loss of lives and destruction of homes and religious buildings, belonging to both parties, by arson. Hence, the 2012 Rakhine-Bengali conflict lasted for five months, from June to October, and caused severe civilian casualties and huge loss of properties. There were accusations from both sides and they argued about who had started torching homes and who had launched attacks first. Anyhow, the undeniable fact is that both sides lost mutual trust in each other.
Now, the displaced Rakhine ethnic people from the IDP Camps were successfully resettled while the displaced Bengalis were not.

**Rebellion of Bengali Muslims in the recent past**

Following the besiege of Maungdaw in May 1988, around 120 Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) insurgents entered Maungdaw Township in Myanmar via sea route in 1994. On 28 April 1994, nine out of twelve bombs planted in different areas in Maungdaw by RSO insurgents exploded. The authorities found three bombs that did not explode. At the same night, around 80 RSO insurgents entered southern part of Maungdaw while around 40 RSO insurgents entered the northern part.

The insurgents who entered southern part of Maungdaw attacked Kyauk Pandu village and Zayya Waddy village while those entered northern part attacked Shwe Taung village. Afterwards, when Myanmar Armed Forces conducted appropriate security operation towards the insurgents, 58 RSO were killed, 8 persons who planted the bombs were captured and their arms and ammunitions were seized within 20 days. The movement by RSO at that time was soundly defeated.

Four years after 2012 riots, the Bengali Muslims launched attacks to the Government of Myanmar's border guard posts on 9 October 2016. Hundreds of unidentified insurgents simultaneously attacked three border posts along Myanmar's border; Kotangauk post, Ngakhuya post and Kyeekan Pyin post where No. 1 Border Guard Police Headquarter is based. Nine police personnel and five soldiers were killed in the attack and 48 guns were looted by the insurgents during the whole month of October. As for Bengali Muslim insurgents, 34 were killed and 49 were captured.

Since then, the instability and armed attacks in Maungdaw region occurred once again. The Government and Myanmar Armed Forces could keep the situation under control at the end of that year. It
was said that the armed movement of Bengali Muslims in Maungdaw was then orchestrated by Al Qamu Mujahid group and coats of arm and flags of RSO were also found during skirmishes.

On 31 May 2017, the border guard police had seized 40 walkie-talkies from a Moulvi’s house in Chaung Kala (north) village and that Moulvi still remained at large. Besides, there were 30 civilian casualties and 22 missing (total – 52 people) commencing from 9 October 2016 to the end of May 2017. In the civilian casualties, it was found out that Bengali Muslim village heads and Muslim people who had close relationship with government administration bodies were continuously murdered.

In May, during the explosion of mine while installing, two Pakistanis were found among the dead. Current Bengali Muslims insurgent groups are related with global terrorist organizations.

After the Coup d’état by General Ne Win, all organizations which included the name Rohingya were announced as unlawful, along with other particular organizations, in 1963. Bengali activists, including Mohammad Jafar Habib, the president of the Rohingya student union, went underground and the Rohingya Independence Front (RIF) was established in May 1963. The group became the first ever insurgent group which used the name “Rohingya” and the revived insurgent group after the defeat of Mujahiddins in 1961. In 1974, the name of the group was changed to the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) and they could station only in Chittagong district of Bangladesh and were not able to be active in Rakhine.

In 1978, when the Operation Nagamin (Operation Dragon King) with the aim of scrutinising residents in Rakhine State was conducted, around 250,000 Bengalis crossed the border to seek refuge in Bangladesh. Then, it drew the attention of International community and started to gain the support from Saudi Arabia.

Soon after gaining support from International community, more radical elements broke away from the RPF and formed the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO). The RSO became the most
influential and extreme faction amongst Rohingya insurgent groups by basing itself on religious grounds. It gained support from various Islamist groups from International Islamic community, including the groups from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Malaysia and Kashmir. In the RSO camps based in Ukhiya, Bangladesh, the Afghan trainers were found and about 100 RSO insurgents attended the training courses in Afghanistan. However, when the RSO entered Rakhine and launched attacks in 1994, they were soundly defeated.

Moderate Bengali Muslims formed Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (abbreviated ARIF). The group was formed after mobilising remnants of the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) and a defecting faction of the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO). However, their strength was not expanded and could not even gain a well-foothold in Bangladesh. Afterwards, in 1998, it became Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO) by proclaiming the middle way and operating in-exile in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. Later, when the Bangladesh Government more controlled the border area, these groups could not make movements as they wished.

However, some Bengali Muslim activists in Rakhine could make further connections with Muslim militants from Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. Some people assumed that more active and powerful generation emerged through them. They launched attacks which led to severe casualties in February and May 2014 respectively. But, those were not mentioned in local media at that time. Then, attacks broke out again in October 2016.

These militants were trained in the border area of Bangladesh and Pakistan and are linked to transnational terrorist groups from the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The main ringleader behind the movement is known as Abdus Qadoos Burmi, whose parents were once from Rakhine. It was not yet clearly known that how many militants were there, how they were equipped with arms, who the leader was and what the name of the organization was, until June 2017. Bertil Lintner, expert on Myanmar issues, assumed that they were active with several names until then.
According to the press statements of Government of Myanmar in June 2017, the terrorist attacks in October 2016 were carried out by Aqua Mul Mujahidin (AMM) Group and there was also another group namely Rohingya National Security Committee. On 15 March 2017, Aqua Mul Mujahidin united with Rohingya National Security Committee (RNSA) to form Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). Hafiz Tohar from Aqua Mul Mujahidin (AMM) was said to be assigned as Officer-in-charge of military affairs of the newly formed group. In June 2017, Myanmar Armed Forces raid on an insurgent camp on Mayu mountain range, supposedly belonging to ARSA, as part of the "area security operation" by the Government. Moreover, the Government of Myanmar official announced that ARSA insurgent group brutally murdered 30 civilians and kidnapped 22 others; the victims were village leaders and librarians.

It might be certain to some extent that the insurgent groups which were currently active in Maungdaw area had linked to transnational Islamic militants, ISIS, etc.. Therefore, the Jane’s Defence periodical reviewed on 2016 Maungdaw attack and predicted that the terrorist attacks will get worse in 2017. It is also assumed that there will be more attacks by Muslims militants in Southeast Asia due to the armed conflicts in Marawi, the Philippines and in the southern part of Thailand.

The most important thing to be cautious in Maungdaw attack at the end of the year 2016 is the linkage of insurgent groups with international Islamic extremist terrorists.

**Solving the problem in successive periods**

The Bengali Muslim problem in Rakhine State was solved in the previous successive periods. It is very difficult to assume that the outnumbered population of Bengalis in Rakhine is just ordinary number.
The population of Muslims in Maungdaw and Buthidaung was (111,723) in 1911, (133,680) in 1921, (390,303) in 1973, (454,760) in 1983, (549,548) in 1993, (646,544) in 2003, and (755,371) in 2016, respectively, and therefore, such number of population is quite questionable, regarding the fact of illegal migration from Bangladesh where population explosion is terrific. It is also informed that during the liberation war of East Pakistan in 1971, half a million people from Bangladesh fled to Myanmar and sought refuge. During the war, around 3 million Bengal refugees fled to neighboring India too.

When Operation *Hintha* (*Brahminy duck*< Legendary bird) and Operation *Nagamin* (*Dragon King*) were conducted to register citizens and control the illegal migrants, hundreds of thousands of Bengalis fled to Bangladesh. However, Myanmar could not implement the operations effectively and efficiently, and had to receive Bengalis back later due to the pressure by UN and International community.

Furthermore, there were some factors which fuelled the problem by some politicians, who were thirst for votes, such as recognizing Rohingya in the AFPFL Government period to canvass for votes, establishing the Mayu Border Frontier, and issuing the White Card to Bengalis in the late period of SPDC Government so that they could cast their votes for USDP Party. Besides, Myanmar authorities without having firm principles have done some mistakes, focusing on their favor. For instance, it was not a problem to issue identity cards to the Mone Wun Chinese, who lives in the Tarmonye region of Shan State; however, easily-changing the group’s classification to Mone Wun (Bamar) was a mistake. Due to the lack of firm policy, the problem gets worse.

2012 Rakhine-Bengali riot occurred during the time of President U Thein Sein, and he formed an Inquiry Commission to investigate the root causes. However, the problem was not solved during his presidency. He even declared white cards invalid and announced a plan to replace them with national verification cards (NVCs), but less achievement was received. After abolishing the white
cards, he gained support from the Rakhine ethnic people to some extent, but the dissatisfaction of Bengalis grew on the other hand.

After NLD Government took office in 2016, Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, headed by former UN Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan, was formed. Interim Report and Recommendations of the Commission was submitted on March 2017. That report pointed out the health, education and economic socio-economic challenges that currently face Rakhine State and recommended that concerted actions should be taken for the problems, like citizenship, quick closure of IDP camps, media access, and freedom of movements for Bengalis.

However, the Commission did not receive any support from local Rakhine ethnic people and Rakhine Parties, which were represented by Rakhine ethnic people in the time of elections.

**Challenges of Bengali conflict in Rakhine**

1. Concerning Bengalis in Rakhine State, Rakhine ethnic people have concrete evidences which claimed that Bengalis migrated to Rakhine in three different times and the massive migration occurred during the British colonial rule. They also claimed that those Bengalis are of Chittagong origins.

As for Bengalis, they claimed themselves as ethnic *Rohingyas*, descendants of Arab Muslim merchants, who had arrived Rakhine State by sea route since 7 century. However, the term “Rohingya” was neither mentioned nor described in the records and gazettes of British who had ruled Rakhine State for 123 years. Besides, the term was not even used in the Rakhine Muslim Conference which was held in Alethangyaw Village in June 1951 and they just used the term “Rakhine Muslims”. The name of a so-called ethnic race, which had allegedly been existed for 1200 years, was not even found in the records of recent past. Therefore, it is not possible to accept the name of that particular group of people, which lacks concrete historical evidence and was not used until 1951.
Such being the case, it is time to solve the problem of that alleged name and the existence of them in Rakhine State, by openly discussing with Historians from both local and abroad, including the representatives from UN Organizations which accepted and used that name “Rohingya”. This should be solved without fail. It cannot be solved through the neutralized usage, like “Buddhist Community in Rakhine State” and “Muslim Community in Rakhine State”. And, the approach of “forcibly stopping both sides” is of no use at all.

This problem is the one that either a particular ethnic people had been existed in Rakhine since a thousand year ago or not. If this problem is not solved clearly, the International Community will mistake that a particular ethnic race is being persecuted. Therefore, decisive solution should be initiated to clarify if these Bengalis are either a kind of ethnic people that had been existed for thousand years or the Chittagonians who were brought into Rakhine by British during the Colonial period. After solving this source of problem first, others can be solved appropriately.

2. Regarding the citizenship problem, it is the right of a sovereign nation to promulgate the citizenship law, and the citizenship process shall be implemented in line with the existing domestic rules and regulations. According to the records of British, amongst Chittagonians who migrated to Rakhine in 1930, there would be those who were born in Rakhine, and therefore, many of them could be granted citizenship if it is systematically implemented in line with Citizenship law. Besides, it is necessary to specify a particular status for those who will not be recognized as citizens yet. Those who gained citizenship in line with existing law should also be granted “rights of a citizen”.

The Bengali’s demand for the status of indigenous ethnic race and demand for the establishment of separate Muslim state shall never be acceptable for the Rakhine ethnic people, Union Government and Tatmadaw. Besides, Bengali Muslims should willingly extend their cooperation to the authorities to ensure the citizenship in line with the existing law. Rejecting to do so can be regarded as the wrong act. The
citizenship problem is more pragmatic rather than the problem of being recognized as a particular ethnic race or a separate Muslim state. Without the basis of being recognized as citizen, it is not likely to solve other problems.

During the British rule, there were so many Indian migrants residing in Yangon and Mandalay. Once, the Indians become the majority in Yangon because of the British. Most of them, both Hindus and Muslims, were granted citizenship and they keep residing in Myanmar as citizens till to date. However, they did not make any demand that they should be recognized as ethnic race or they should have separate Muslim state. They just focused on the citizenship and they stand as Myanmar Muslims or Muslims citizens of Myanmar.

It is also needed for the UN and INGOs to recognize and cooperate with authorities regarding citizenship and it is necessary to explain them that the citizenship procedures should not be ignored.

Citizenship is crucial for the things like closure of IDP Camps, Freedom of movement and education as well. Each and every nation promulgated the relevant citizenship law and the citizenship of the people must be in line with it.

3. In resolving the Rakhine problem, the Union Government, with or without having advice from someone, should firstly cooperate with Rakhine people who are definite citizens and have the right to vote. It is not possible to solve the Rakhine-Bengali Muslim problem if the Union Government failed to seize the cooperation of local ethnic people and acted like a mediator or a referee.

Without the cooperation of local ethnic people, the Union Government would face the protests, like the protest to the government decision to allow the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to open an aid office in Rakhine State during the presidency of U Thein Sein and the protest to the establishment of Kofi Annan Advisory Commission by the NLD Government. It can surely be solved through the cooperation by the local ethnic people only.
4. The civil administration power of the Government should also be effective on Bengalis, as similarly as the Rakhine ethnic people in Rakhine State.

In order to solve the Bengali Problem in Rakhine State, it is necessary to consider not only the current situation, but also the historical issues. It should be focused on the entire problem and should not focus partially. In addition, this problem should not be seemed as the problem related to Rakhine State only, but as the one related to the whole country. It is also necessary to emphasize that there exists the historical problem which means more than the mere co-existence of peoples of different religious faiths.

5. The proliferation of Bengali population in Rakhine State might disorder the balance of the societies and it is needed to control the illegal migration of Bengalis to Rakhine and also to conduct appropriate measures to control the Bengalis Muslims not to marry many wives and bear the children without any limitation. Marriage Laws for Muslims from the countries like Singapore should also be referred.

6. The public representatives from both sides should involve and seek the answer for the peaceful co-existence between Rakhine and Bengali. It would be assumed that although the task is easy in theory, it is quite challenging to bring about it practically, due to the vivid separation, like water and oil in a same cup, between Rakhine and Bengali Muslims in Rakhine State Community nowadays. In reality, there also exists anxiety in both sides.

Moreover, as for those who live in main land and analyse the Rakhine-Bengali conflict, it is required for them to take into serious consideration that the conflict is not just the problem for Rakhine, as well as not just the co-existence between different faiths, but the one dealing with the citizenship and freedom of movement for over one million Bengali Muslim population across the country. It is also necessary to understand that the problem is leading to the demand to grant Muslim state.
7. Since series of coordinated attacks to border posts in Maungdaw which had happened in the end of 2016 is connected with the international extremist terrorists, it is a problem that should be seriously cautious. The extremist terrorists used to target at innocent civilian. Moreover, they also employ civilian as human-shields during their attacks. It is quite easy to explain attacks to civilian by terrorists to international community. However, it is very difficult to counter-attack on terrorists who employ civilians as human shields as well as to explain that counter-attack to international community. So, it is necessary to make preparations for it.

Furthermore, reviewing terrorist attacks of Bengali Muslims in Maungdaw, it was found out that terrorists recruit people from different villages, rather than forming a permanent armed force. In addition, it is assumed that those terrorists train people in the Bengali villages, which has thousands of households and is difficult to access by government administration, rather than base in the forests. There was no evidence of terrorist base in the forest used by those who have attacked Maungdaw. The problem is so complicated that it is difficult to solve. This should be explained clearly to the international community.

In order to properly response the propaganda full of misleading photos and videos by Bengali Muslims, it is not sufficient only with the government media and, therefore, important to establish a powerful and strong media.

8. Another crucial issue in Maungdaw is that of narcotic drugs. The local people said that the amount of Yaba pills being smuggled to Bangladesh from Maungdaw is so huge that it is even difficult to estimate. Moreover, the demand from the Bangladesh side is also so tremendously high that they could purchase all contraband drugs. It is also said that those narcotic drugs from Maungdaw are even smuggled to the Middle East via Bangladesh and the volume of trade is constantly high.
Seizures of Yaba in Maungdaw during the period of the end of 2016 to 2017 were the record amounts. Drug smuggling is also related to bribery, corruption and terrorism.

9. Pakistanis extremists' involvement in terrorist activities in Maungdaw attack has been already proved, by witnessing two Pakistanis dead during the bomb testing and therefore, it is necessary to be very cautious about the infiltration of foreign terrorists into the area as they could launch inhumane terror attacks targeting at innocent civilians like they did in other parts of the world.

So, there should be no hesitation to resolve the Bengali problem in Rakhine state and if it takes longer time, there will surely be another eruption again. It is necessary to be decisive about the status of Rohingya as an ethnic race or not. Based on that decision, the citizenship problem could be solved in accordance with the law. It is also needed to take into consideration all sides of the problem as well as historical issues.

In observing the Bengali problem in Rakhine state, the above-mentioned have been conducted, covering situations as of the period between April and end of June 2017. Before concluding this paper, the Bengali problem in Rakhine state had erupted once again and subsequently, the additional remarks have been written as follows:

Bengali Issue and Rakhine State parliament (Rakhine State Hluttaw)

As the situations in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung became difficult with the terrorism, murder and disappearance, without being able to expose the culprit; the despair of the local ethnic people arose and they started to flee from their places of origin. Under such circumstances, Rakhine State parliament (Rakhine State Hluttaw) formed a committee of enquiry to investigate the worry and despair of the local populace and the terrorist attacks in Maungdaw, Buthidaung
and Rathedaung. Their investigation was commenced on 1 July 2017 and ended on 3 July 2017.

The committee comprised nine members: 7 Regional Parliament representatives and 2 members from Regional parliament advisory board. U Tun Aung Thein, the State Parliament representative from No.2 Buthidaung constituency took the role of Chairman in the committee. The report of the committee was submitted and discussed at the Regional parliament on 14 July 2017.

In the report, six main factors were categorized as follows;

1. The attitude of local populace to the protection and safety ensured by the Government.
2. The gravity of fear and anxiety caused by being threatened
3. The difficulties in daily livelihood, social affairs and movements.
4. On-ground situation, security coverage, the short and long term plans for defense.
5. Emergency escape route and assembling point for sheltering
6. UNHCR, NGO, INGOs and future of Rakhine state

In the first factor of the report, there included inability to scrutinize the entry and exit of visitors/strangers in the area, inability to expose the culprits of terrorist-killings, inability of administration and security personnel to access Bengali villages at any time, no influence of administrative power on Bengali villages, the fact that the Border Guard Police are supposed to take care of their own outpost under the instruction of not-going beyond 500 yard of it, and movements of people who covered their bodies with black clothes inside the Bengali villages between 10 pm to 5 am.

In the second factor, there described fear and despair of local ethnic people who started to think about abandoning their places of
origin as they were being threatened by the majority Bengalis, making their daily livelihoods (farming, fishery, hill farming, and hunting for meal) more difficult.

As for the third factor, it was mentioned that if the local ethnic people, who live from hand to mouth, could not accordingly make their living, they would face difficulties for food, clothing and shelter within a few months. Moreover, it was also stated that the perennial plants, farming and fishing traps, belonging to the local ethnic people, are destroyed by Bengalis, and some Bengalis, who have business partnership with Rakhine people, were being bullied and threatened, and the most suspicious thing spread among the Rakhine ethnic people was that Bengalis did not prepare or plough for farming even though the monsoon season was about to fall, except in some plot around the village.

In the fourth factor, it was mentioned that the villages of local ethnic people are surrounded by the larger Bengali villages and it was difficult for them to communicate with other ethnic villages. Then, it was also stated that killing of Bengali administrators by terrorists amounts to the obvious act of defiance against government administrative authority and the narcotic drugs trafficking was the challenge for the stability and rule of law in the region. The corruption of civil servants, including the personnel from security and defense services caused the corrosion of line of security and defense.

In the fifth factor, the difficulty to transport in rainy season in case of emergency due to the location of small villages of ethnic people between the large Bengali villages was mentioned. Moreover, it was also mentioned to keep cautious as the Bengalis usually create the conflicts in the rainy season during which the transportation was difficult and the current situation of Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Rathedaung looked like a volcano about to erupt.

As for the sixth factor, it was stated that UNHCR, NGO and INGO had been supporting the Bengalis for over 20 years, whereas local ethnic people were neglected in poverty. So, Rakhine people
regarded the UNHCR, NGO and INGO as the organizations which were trying to create new Rohingya ethnic race, even though they kept saying "humanity and peaceful coexistence between two communities". For instance, the seed grains distributing plan of ICRC included only one Rakhine village, namely Yay Myat Taung, and all the rest villages are the Bengali villages. It is therefore recommended to thoroughly check the projects of those organizations.

In the Rakhine State Parliament, the discussions had been made to increase security measures and law enforcement actions since the situations in Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Rathedaung were critical and about to erupt. However, the NLD Ministers from Rakhine State Government responded that the concern should be relieved as the sufficient security personnel had been already deployed in the Maungdaw region. Accordingly, although the report was duly submitted and confirmed by the State Parliament, it was not undertaken with seriousness by the Government. It was said that the State Parliament had forwarded the report to the President for his information only. It could be pointed out that the situations of Bengalis were not mentioned in the report. However, in July 2017, Bengali administrators who were close to the government authority were cruelly murdered and threatened and, Bengalis stopped making contact not only with the government authority, parliament members, but also with the ordinary Rakhine people. Therefore, it was assumed that it was not possible to meet and interview moderate Bengalis for the report due to the aforementioned situation at that time.

The Deteriorating Situation in Maungdaw

Staring from the end of July in 2017, the security condition of Maungdaw was worsening. On 27 July 2017, a group of civilian and security personnel, searching for a missing ethnic local on the Mayu mountain range, discovered huts presumably used by the terrorists and provisions distributed to Bengali refugees by WFP and NGOs.
Then, on 3 August 2017, eight Mro ethnic people from Kaing Gyi village in Maungdaw were killed. Although the culprits were not known, everyone believed that it was committed by the Bengali extremist terrorists. On 4 August 2017, a unit of 40 policemen went to the village of ‘Auk Nan Yar (Razar Bil) to arrest 6 terrorists. They were severely attacked by a group of 600 Bengali villagers, who tried to take back the arrested terrorists by using sticks and swords. In the raid, 2 terrorists escaped and the security personnel also had to unavoidably fire warning shoot, pointing their guns skywards and fled to safety from the scene.

After such kind of situation in which the security personnel had to flee, the local ethnic people, totaling 649 persons from 134 households, from Chut Pyin, Padauk Myaing, Pin Shay and Pauk Pyin villages, which are located near Rathedaung, abandoned their villages and assembled at the Zedipyyin where security personnel were based.

At that time, there were over 90 people in the lists of the murdered and the missing, according to the official press releases by the Government. The murdered were the ones whose bodies were discovered and the missing were those, who were believed to be dead although their bodies were not found. In the list of the murdered, it can be assumed that there were Rakhine ethnic people who went in search of food in the forest and unfortunately met the terrorists in the forest and were murdered. Besides, those who were brutally murdered with the ill intention of frightening the local people to flee from the region were also included in the list. The Bengali victims included those, who had contact with government authority, such as village administrators, clerks, and librarians, and those who were alleged to be informants for the Government, it was also learnt.

**Situation in Maungdaw and ANP(Rakhine Political Party)**

After the massacre of 8 innocent Mro ethnic people from Kaing Gyi village, ANP representatives put up urgent proposals in Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw (Lower and Upper Houses) that
the security coverage should be enhanced due to the deteriorating situations of Maungdaw. However, their proposals faced with suspension by the respective Hluttaws and were in vain.

On August 8 2017, members of parliament from ANP Party sent a letter, requesting the call on Commander in Chief to discuss the situations in Maungdaw. Commander in Chief accepted and met with seven-member delegation of ANP on 9 August 2017. Next day, a battalion was dispatched to Sittwe, Rakhine State by Tatmadaw Air Force.

There were some criticisms, regarding the deployment of troops in Rakhine just after the meeting of Commander in Chief and ANP MPs. One of the main criticisms is that ANP directly contacted with Army, rather than the incumbent NLD government. However, ANP responded that their proposals submitted via parliament channel were called off and as the situations in Maungdaw were very crucial, they met with the most responsible person for security and defense. And they also mentioned that it is NLD who failed to discuss with ANP MPs who represented the majority Rakhine people.

Maungdaw Conflict, Parliament and Government

Following such situations happened; the proposal to enhance the security in Maungdaw District was allowed to be discussed at both Upper and Lower Houses of the Parliament. The proposal in Lower House was submitted by Daw Khin Saw Wai from ANP Party, MP of Rathedaung Constituency, since 30 June 2017. The proposal was allowed to be discussed on 18 August 2017, just ten days after the meeting between the Commander-in-Chief and ANP members of Parliament. However, her proposal of “Urging the Government to swiftly implement the better administration and security plans in the region as the crimes committed by Bengali terrorist organizations in the
northern part of Rakhine, like Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung, threaten the national security, law enforcement, perpetuation of the land and domestic tranquility”, was discussed in Lower House, and then, turned down by the objection votes of majority of the MPs on 24 August 2017, with the reason that the Government had already taken necessary security measures.

Also, U Khin Maung Latt from ANP Party, MP of No.3 Constituency of Rakhine State, was allowed to discuss the proposal in Upper House on 16 August 2017. His proposal of “Urging the Union Government to find out and take legal actions against the terrorists who were active in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung, in accord with the Counter-Terrorist law and to ensure keeping intact of villages abandoned by the ethnic people in fear of being threatened” was discussed at the Upper House and approved accordingly.

However the proposal submitted by Daw Khin Saw Wai in Lower House was submitted on 30 June 2017, it was allowed to be discussed on 18 August 2017, whereas that of U Khin Maung Latt was submitted on 9 August 2017 and allowed to be discussed after a week. Daw Khin Saw Wai’s proposal was submitted earlier before the Rakhine State Parliament established the inquiry commission, after reviewing on-ground situation. U Khin Maung Latt’s proposal was submitted after the murder case of eight Mro people from Kainggyi village by terrorists and the incident in Auk Nan Yar village in which the culprits arrested by the security personnel was taken by the mob. These proposals were discussed at the parliament only after the meeting between the Commander-in-Chief and ANP MPs.

It was assumed that the proposals to discuss the security of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung, submitted by ANP MPs, in the NLD-dominated parliament was suspended to wait for the final report of Kofi Annan Commission established by the NLD Government. It was also assumed that the discussions in the parliament were allowed, unavoidably, after the ANP MPs called on the Commander-in-Chief.
Also, when the proposals were being discussed, the one in Lower House was turned down quickly on 24 August. Unfortunately, terrorist attacks broke out in various parts of Maungdaw in the midnight of 24 August and early morning of 25 August. When the votes were cast to discuss the proposal in Upper House on 30 August and approved, the terrorists staged severe attacks in Maungdaw.

The two proposals were quite similar in nature, however, NLD MPs from Lower House turned down one proposal and those from Upper House approved the other. The decision of NLD plays an important role at both parliaments where are dominated by majority of NLD MPs. The NLD MPs who approved the proposal unavoidably in the time of terrorist attacks, could accept the current situation rightly, but failed to prepare the necessary measures before the incidents happened, so to mention.

**Maungdaw and Security**

Before the terrorist attacks happened, the Union government, the State government and the Minister of Home Affairs stated that sufficient security measures have been already taken in Maungdaw. And, just one day after the meeting between Commander-in-Chief and ANP MPs, troops from Myanma Tatmataw were dispatched to Rakhine by air on 10 August 2017 and it was said that there were one or two divisions of troops. Rakhine State Government reiterated that it was needless to worry about the security of Maungdaw after the deployment of troops in Rakhine.

However, on 25 August 2017, just 15 days after the deployment, the terrorists launched attacks and it was, therefore, clearly found out that the security measures were not enough. 30 police outposts were attacked and civilians from villages of Rakhine, Hindus and Kathay were brutally murdered and fled for their lives.

It was reviewed that those incidents occurred owing to the corruption spread among service personnel and lack of information of the terrain, sufficient armed troops, and military intelligence. The Kofi Annan Commission pointed out that it happened because of the
complication in the administration and composition of security forces, like Military, Border Guard Police and Police of the State.

Anyhow, the weakness of security coverage in Maungdaw was obviously found out during the terrorist attacks. During the visit of Commander-in-Chief to Sittwe, Buthidaung and Maungdaw from 19-21 September 2017, Senior General met with the local populace and expressed regret for not having provided fully-implemented security coverage for the public.

**Kofi Annan Commission**

Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, well-known as Kofi Annan Commission, plays an crucial role in current Bengali issue in Rakhine. On 5 September 2016, at the behest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor of Myanmar, an Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Mr. Kofi Annan, was established.

It is composed of six local and three international experts. The Members of the Commission were as follows:

1. Mr. Kofi Annan  
   Chairman of Kofi Annan Foundation  

2. U Win Mra  
   Head of the National Human Rights Commission of Myanmar

3. Dr. Tha Hla Shwe  
   Former President of the Myanmar Red Cross Society

4. Mr. Ghassan Salamé  
   Lebanon’s Minister of Culture (2000-2003), Senior Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General (2003-2006)

5. Mrs. Laetitia van den Assum  
   Netherlands Ambassador to UK (2012-2015)

6. U Aye Lwin  
   Founding Member of Religions for Peace (NGO)
7. Dr. Mya Thida  President of Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of the Myanmar Medical Association

8. U Khin Maung Lay  Member of the Human Rights Commission of Myanmar

9. Daw Khin Saw Tint  Chairperson of the Rakhine Literature and Cultural Association (Yangon), Vice Chair of Rakhine Women’s Association (Yangon)

Commencing from 5 September 2016, the Commission had sought input and advice from local and international organizations, Heads of States from ASEAN Region, Responsible Officials from United Nations, Diplomats accredited to Myanmar, International NGOs, independent analysts and organizations in the region. The Commission also met and discussed with the high ranking officials from the Government and Military. Since its launch in September 2016, the Commission conducted over 155 consultations and met with 110 representatives of various stakeholders, by travelling extensively throughout Rakhine State, including Sittwe, Mrauk U, Myay Pon, Kyauk Taw, Thandwe, Kyauk Phyu, Rambree, Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and so also to Yangon, Naypyitaw, Bangkok, Dhaka, Cox’s Bazar, and Geneva.

However, there was objection against the Commission as soon as it was established in early September 2016 and there was a proposal submitted at the Union Parliament to dissolve the Commission. That proposal was supported by Arakan National Party, Union Solidarity and Development Party and military representatives, but the motion was eventually failed. In the mid-September, a similar motion in the Rakhine State Parliament was successful, leading to a boycott by ANP and Rakhine civil society groups against the Commission. Although the Commission had tried to engage directly with opponents, the boycott has hampered the Commission’s efforts to get compromise from all stakeholders in the State.
Although the Commission was composed of foreigners taking leading role, it was just the domestic organisation to carry out the particular task assigned by the Government and it had to submit reports to the State Authorities in Nay Pyi Taw. Following the terrorist attacks in Maungdaw in October 2016, the Commission submitted interim report on the matters which are necessary for the Government to take quick actions on 16 March 2017, followed by the final report submitted on 24 August 2017.

**Basic perspective in the Commission’s Report**

The Commission’s report has done based on three basic crises in Rakhine State; they are development crisis, human rights crisis, and security crisis.

The Commission had considered two main factors in Rakhine State as well. The first factor is the conflicted relationship between the people of Rakhine and the central government and the second factor is the tense and violent relations at times between the two major communities in Rakhine.

Regarding the historical background of Rakhine State, the Commission described that it was once an independent Kingdom and later annexed by Burmese King and British Colonialists respectively. Moreover, it was also mentioned that there had been a Muslim community in Rakhine since before the Burmese invasion, its size increased rapidly during colonial times. British colonial policies to expand rice cultivation in Rakhine called for significant labours and, consequently, the size of the Muslim community seems to have increased from the 1880s to the 1930s since Muslim workers from Bengal were brought in.

The Commission stated that much as Rakhines and Muslims have lived peacefully together in Rakhine for long, during the chaotic periods of the Anglo-Japanese war in 1942-43, both communities suffered from violence and widespread displacement. More recently, in June and October 2012, the state was shaken again by large-scale inter-
communal violence, during which at least 192 people were killed (134 Muslims and 58 Rakhines) and 8,614 destroyed houses were destroyed of which 7,422 belonged to Muslims. Moreover, more than 95 % of the approximately 140,000 IDPs generated by the conflict were Muslims.

The Commissioned mentioned that it was sad to have witnessed that although both communities in Rakhine State have been highlighting only on their respective historical facts so as to expose that they become ill-fated victims of violence for so long due to the strong desire of meeting political aims officially and not-getting justice, they neglected the fear and loss of the other side.

**Main Findings and Recommendations of the Report**

There were 17 factors described in the main findings and recommendations and they are as follows:-

(1) Economic and social development of Rakhine State  
(2) Citizenship  
(3) Freedom of movement  
(4) Internally displaced persons (IDPs) issues  
(5) Humanitarian access  
(6) Media access  
(7) Education  
(8) Health  
(9) Drugs  
(10) Communal participation and representation  
(11) Inter-communal cohesion  
(12) Security sector  
(13) Access to justice  
(14) Cultural development  
(15) Border issues and the bilateral relationship with Bangladesh  
(16) Regional relations
1. Economic and social development of Rakhine State

It is mentioned that although Rakhine State is fertile, well-endowed with natural resources, compared with other states, State’s economy was stagnating and under-development. According to the index of World Bank, the state’s poverty rate is 78 %, almost double the national poverty rate of 37.54 %, (the Government’s figure for the poverty rate in Rakhine is 43.5 %, as compared with 25.6 % nationally). In the northern part of Rakhine state, 60 % of households are landless. While other parts of Myanmar have seen rapid economic growth over the past years, Rakhine’s economy has lagged behind. Various factors were pointed out to bring about economic growth in the State.

It was remarked that there are foreign investments from China and India in Rakhine state and the Commission pointed out the dissatisfaction of local populace towards the central government since the local people were not given the chance to take part in implementing the foreign projects and the government had failed to ensure the fair sharing to the local societies. So, the Commission advised that it is necessary to enhance the participation of local populace in making decisions resulting in the development of the State and to carry out for the local populace to fully enjoy the fruits arising out of other investments including resource sharing. The Commission also pointed out that it is necessary to take into consideration discussing matter on resource sharing between the Union and State Governments, in the national peace process and constitutional reform.

The recommendation of the Commission appeared to mean that the fundamental factor to resolve the problem in Rakhine is the enhancement of economic and social development.

2. Citizenship
The Commission pointed out the citizenship issue as the major hindrance towards the peace and prosperity of Rakhine State. The Commission suggested that the verification process should be accelerated and the 1982 Citizenship Law should be reviewed.

Currently, approximately 4,000 Muslims (as well as 9,000 Kamans) have been recognized as citizens or naturalized citizens. Around 10,000 Muslims have already received National Verification Cards (NVC), as well.

The process was first introduced as a pilot project in Myebon Township in 2014, where Temporary Resident Card (TRC)-holders were allowed to apply for citizenship on the condition that their ethnicity was stated as “Bengali”. The process was suspended following protests from both communities, but was restarted and expanded to all of Rakhine State in January 2015. After announcing the cancellation of the TRCs in February 2015, the Government started issuing its replacement – Identity Cards of National Verification (ICNV) – in June 2015. In fact, National Verification Cards is a renaming of the ICNV and the applicants are no longer required to indicate their ethnicity or religion in the application form.

However, due to the sporadic implementation of the process, incapability for consultation and disseminating required information among both communities, both communities felt doubtful of the process and opposed, followed by losing trust, said the Commission.

So, the Commission pointed out that the Government should establish a clear strategy and timeframe for the citizenship verification process that should be discussed with members of the Rakhine and Muslim communities. Public awareness campaign should also be conducted.

While recognizing that the 1982 law is fundamental to the citizenship process, the Commission recommended that it is necessary for the Government to review it.

The Commission suggested that the Government should ensure the right to grant citizenship for every child who was born in
Myanmar, as per the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, it is also mentioned that the government should re-examine the current citizenship and ethnicity, and make a provision for individuals, who have been residing in Myanmar for so long, for applying naturalized citizenship, in order not to be stateless.

Moreover, the Commission mentioned that, although a nationality verification process was carried out across Myanmar in 1989 and National Registration Cards (NRCs) were issued, those who were found in line with the new requirements were issued new “Citizenship Scrutiny Cards” (CSCs) replacing their National Registration Cards (NRCs). Although the majority NRCs holders of Muslims in Rakhine surrendered their NRCs, CSCs for them were never issued, rendering them de facto stateless.

The Commission has pointed out the issue of around one million stateless people in Myanmar as a challenging one.

3. Freedom of Movement

The Commission considered that the lack of freedom of movement for the Muslims in Rakhine could hinder the compatibility between the communities, economic development and social development and such movement restriction produced a wide range of detrimental effects including lessening accessibility to education, health and services, and strengthened communal segregation.

Therefore, restrictions officially-set by the Government as well as ad hoc ones exercised by societies hindered the freedom of movement. The Commission said that that all individuals residing in Rakhine State should be allowed to freely move irrespective of whether they hold an NVC card, NRC card or citizenship documentation, consistent with the basic right of every human-being.

4. Internally Displaced Persons Issues (IDPs) issues
The Commission is of the view that the Government needs to adopt clear timeframe to relocate approximately 120,000 Muslims, who were confined at IDP camps since 2012, to their places of origin and close IDPs. After the interim report was submitted, the Government successfully relocated Rakhine IDPs from *Ka Nyin Taw* to an already identified relocation site and moved the displaced Kaman Muslim households from Rambree to Yangon Region. However, relocating Muslim households, former residents from Minn Ther village had to suspend, mainly due to the resistance from Rakhine people.

The Commission suggested that the Government of Myanmar should prepare a comprehensive strategy to close all IDP camps in Rakhine State. Moreover, the objectives should be to facilitate return to places of origin as a matter of priority, and to ensure the adequate access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, and security. The IDPs, who were relocated to new places, should also have the right to resettle in their places of origin when the situations favour later.

While IDPs wait for the opportunity to return or relocate, the Government must ensure the adequate living conditions in the camps, including the shelter, water and sanitation, education and livelihood improvements, in accord with the international standards.

5. **Humanitarian Access**

The Commission mentioned that following the terrorist attacks on the Border Guard Police in October 2016, aid groups are no longer able to do their works in some parts of Maungdaw Township. After the Commission’s interim recommendations in March, the humanitarian access in northern Rakhine State has improved. However, aid organizations continue to face certain limitations from relevant government authorities.

The Commission suggested that the Government should ensure full and unimpeded humanitarian access at all times in Rakhine State. The Government is also advised to set the not-too-short-period
for travel permission of aid organizations, and International humanitarian organisations are also advised to consult with and report to the Government about on-going and planned activities in a timely manner.

6. Media Access

The Commission pointed out that media access to the areas of conflict in northern Rakhine State still remains restricted. The Commission recognises the sensitive nature of the conflict in northern Rakhine State, and the Government’s instinct to counter what it perceives to be unfounded rumours and biased narratives. However, policies based on media restriction, which may hinder the flow of information, are counter-productive. In particular, it may undermine the trust in the Government; the Commission believed that full transparency is the most effective way to dispel false and inaccurate portraying the situation on the ground.

7. Education

Rakhine State’s education sector is lower than the whole country’s and the adult illiteracy rate in Rakhine is approximately 50% higher than the national average. Primary school completion rate is among the lowest in the country. Following the wave of inter-communal violence in 2012, inadequacy of teachers appointed by the Government is increasing due to their unwillingness to work in Rakhine State.

Because of the low quality of education, it undermines efforts to ensure that Muslim children in Rakhine state are educated in Myanmar language – a prerequisite for successful integration as part of the Myanmar community. The Commission expressed its concern for the lack of access to higher education for the Muslim population and suggested that all communities in Rakhine should have equal access to education, irrespective of ethnicity.
8. Health

Access to health services in Rakhine States is very low. The World Health Organization (WHO) has standardised that the minimum number of health workers to maintain a functional health system is 22 health workers per 10,000 inhabitants. However, there are only 5 health workers per 10,000 people in Rakhine, compared to the national average of 16 per 10,000 people. Rakhine has a higher child mortality rate than the national average, and only 19% of women give birth in professional health facilities (compared with 37% nationally). The immunization coverage is among the lowest in the country, and there have been multiple outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases over the recent years, predominantly in the northern part of the Rakhine state. In a 2016 statewide study, 52% of the respondents reported that they do not have access to adequate health care.

The nutritional status of children in Rakhine State is the worst in the country, with 38% of children underdeveloped and 34% underweight.

While all communities suffer from inadequate medical services, access to health care is particularly lower within the Muslim community in Rakhine state. The Commission suggested to enhance equal access to health care, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, race, gender, or citizenship status to improve the medical services in Rakhine state.

9. Drugs

Drug trafficking from Maungdaw to Bangladesh, crossing the border seems to have increased significantly in recent years. In 2016, enormous quantities of drugs (mainly methamphetamine, or “yaba”) were confiscated by Myanmar officials along the border with Bangladesh. The Commission said that Drug smuggling is reportedly
funding the activities of the Arakan Army (AA) and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). Even government officials are accused of involving drug trade. Under such circumstances, the Commission urged the Government should intensify its efforts to eradicate illicit drug trafficking.

10. Participation and Representation in Politics and Societies

The Commission considered that all ethnic groups in Rakhine State lack political representation. As such, local communities are generally unable to influence political processes affecting their lives, and have few mechanisms to air their grievances. Most fundamentally, these challenges arose from the form of relationship between the central government and the states, as defined by the 2008 Constitution.

The majority of important policy-related matters fall under the jurisdiction of the Union level, but not decided by the State Parliament. The parliamentary elections in 2015 resulted in a state-level victory for the Arakan National Party (ANP), winning the majority of contested seats in the Rakhine parliament. Yet, the nomination of the state’s chief minister remains the prerogative of the central government. That made the ethnic Rakhine people to feel the sentiments of exclusion from playing vital role in political sector, said the Commission.

Under the 2008 constitution, the Military controls some key ministerial posts, as well as the General Administration Department (GAD), responsible for executing functions of state administration. While the military-nominated ministers function as part of the central government under the overall authority of the President, the civilian and military chains of command are separate. However, the ambiguity of authorities makes it difficult for resolving complex problems in the Rakhine State.

The Commission suggested that the Muslim society in Rakhine also should have participation and representation in political and social sectors.
Moreover, the Commission pointed out that out of civil societies (CSOs) in the Rakhine State, only a handful has dedicated staff, permanent office premises, sustainable funding and ongoing activities. There were few training opportunities for CSOs and they, therefore, lack technology and expertise.

In 2015, a decision by the Constitutional Tribunal disenfranchised Temporary Residency Card (TRC)-holders, barring the vast majority of Muslims in the state from voting in the 2015 general elections, and they lost political representation, both at Union and State levels, subsequently. In addition, as civil service posts are open to citizens only, Muslims in Rakhine cannot access positions within the government institutions. Although some Muslims have recently been reinstated as Village Tract Administrators in Muslims-villages, the number of Muslim civil servants is negligible. Moreover, Muslims who cooperate with the Government were threatened and killed by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The Commission mentioned that there are no Muslim CSOs in Rakhine and are restricted to participate in the political and social sectors.

Even the Kaman, despite being recognized as one of Myanmar’s ethnic races, has been unable to register civil society organizations in Rakhine State. Other ethnic and religious groups – Chin, Daing-Net, Mro, Mramagyi, Khamwee, Thet and Hindus – also remain marginalized. One way which could address such inequality is the post of Ethnic Affairs Minister, which may be elected by the members of any recognized ethnic group comprising more than 0.1% of the population of the state. The Commission pointed out that while several minorities in Rakhine are above the said standard, only the Chin community has a designated minister in the State Government.

Women’s representation in political and civil societies remains low in Rakhine state. Only three female parliamentarians from Rakhine State constituencies were elected in 2015 elections. There are currently no female administrators from Village Tract to District levels in the state. The Commission pointed out that much as some women’s rights-focused civil society groups in Rakhine have managed to
perform in the interest of women to some extent, they do not have effective participation in policymaking.

11. Inter-communal cohesion

Both Rakhine and Muslim communities are fearful about the possibility of renewed inter-communal violence, and mutual distrust runs deep. In particular, those sentiments are widespread in the north and the central Rakhine. The waves of violence in 2012 damaged social and economic relations between them which were built up over decades. And, although the following few years saw some positive developments, those were ruined again by the escalation of violence in northern Rakhine State in 2016.

The Government held the view that stability and security can only be achieved through the segregation of both communities and supported to do so. However, the violence in northern Rakhine State in 2016 did not spread to other parts of Rakhine, unlike in 2012. Although some interaction and engagement between the two communities started again in some townships, those efforts are only the beginning of a long journey towards the alleviation of conflict and building peace, the Commission mentioned.

The Commission also pointed out that inter-communal tensions in Rakhine state are also related to the Buddhist-Muslim tension across the country as well as hate-speeches.

12. Security

According to the report of the Commission, Security sector in Rakhine state has complexities; the first is protracted inter-communal tension between the two communities, and the second is that both communities have anti-government elements taking up arms in fight against the Government.
Furthermore, the Commission said that there exit prime motives causing more violent conflict in societies of the Rakhine state such as widespread fear and anger within communities and a sense of victimization. Besides, human rights violations were allegedly carried out by the security forces and killings of Muslims seen as linked to the authorities – allegedly carried out by Muslim- militants further divided the unity within the Muslim community. Moreover, people come to perceive the Rakhine state as lawless and insecure region, being a transit hub for illicit drugs trafficking.

Public trust in Myanmar’s security forces unfortunately remains low across the state and the security forces are often accused of failing to provide adequate protection in case of violence. In a survey, a significant number of respondents from all communities in Rakhine identified the “lack of law enforcement” as a major reason for the deteriorating security situation in the state, rising from 24 % in 2015 to 41 % in 2016.

The complex security infrastructure in Rakhine, with varieties of security agencies, has created undesirable problems among the public. First reason for complexity is that the military, the BGP, and the police shared the responsibility for the state security. Second is that the BGP operates not only along the border, but also in Rathedaung Township. Thirdly, immigration officials also had to perform additional functions, as being part of the BGP. Fourthly, it remains unclear how the government policy-makers set the strategy for the BGP and the Myanmar Police, and whether these policing agencies are operationally independent. Finally, there is also no clear and transparent mechanism for overseeing of whether Myanmar policemen perform their duties in line with the professional standards, the Commission pointed out.

13. Access to Justice

The Commission pointed out that utilising formal judicial mechanisms for ensuring the justice for all communities in Rakhine is
limited. Corruption of abuse of authority in law enforcement work are rampant in the whole region and bullying by the government officials was often seen, particularly in the areas controlled by the BGP.

Successive governments have generally failed to educate respective societies about their rights and in consequence, people do not realise the domestic law. The Commission suggested that the Government should intensify rule of law for the positive improvements within the state.

14. Cultural Development

The Commission encouraged the Government of Myanmar to declare Mrauk U as a candidacy for world heritage site, and the Government should collaborate with UNESCO and other international partners to move forward the process to gain the said status.

In addition, the Commission urged the Government to maintain historic, religious and cultural heritages of all communities in Rakhine.

15. Border Issues and Bilateral Relationship with Bangladesh

The Commission pointed out that addressing challenges in Rakhine State requires a strong and good bilateral relationship between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Both countries can cooperate in various sectors such as Infrastructure development projects, trade promotion, management of illegal migration, documentation of refugees and IDPs, voluntary return of refugees, preventing human smuggling and drug trafficking, and combating against violent extremism.

Myanmar and Bangladesh have different historical narratives about the origin of Muslims in Rakhine state and their population growth rate. Differences between the two countries can only be narrowed through dialogue that promotes better mutual understanding.
16. Relations with countries in the Region

Much as the Rakhine issue has been considered by Myanmar as a domestic affair, her neighbouring countries have a keen interest as they are hosting many people from Rakhine State. Under such circumstance, the regional cooperation with ASEAN countries should be enhanced by the Government of Myanmar so that its policies and actions on Rakhine are better understood by them.

17. Implementation of the Commission’s Recommendations

Previous Government of Myanmar developed the Rakhine State project, taking time. In May 2016, the NLD Government established the Central Committee on Implementation of Peace and Development in Rakhine State, consisting of four working committees. Both the current Government and its predecessor only formed the committees, involving all ministries. The Commission pointed out that it may require a designated in-charge with the rank of Union Minister to fully undertake the matters on the Rakhine State along with a staffed supporting group to facilitate between the decisions taken at the Union level and on-ground implementation in the State.

Continuous consultations with representatives of two major communities in Rakhine State is important, and without support of peoples and communities, severe obstacles to the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations may continue.

In the introduction of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, it is stated that, “The Commission hopes that the recommendations stated in this report will provide modest contribution to drawing future working-plans. However, the onus is on all communities in Rakhine State, civil societies and religious and political leaders in collaboration with the Government to practically implement the recommendations.

The 17 factors mentioned above are the recommendations by the Commission.
Review on the Final Report of Kofi Annan Commission

Kofi Annan Report can be reviewed from four perspectives: firstly the fundamental problems of Rakhine state, secondly the citizenship problem, thirdly the additional problems, and finally the resolution of the problem, and particular issue.

First, the fundamental problems are the political and economic ones of Rakhine State. The major issue the Commission has pointed out is that all communities in the state cannot represent in the political sector. Inability to form a State Government by Arakan National Party (ANP) won the majority of contested seats in the Rakhine parliament, as defined by the 2008 Constitution, deepened the sentiment of being excluded from important political role for the ethnic Rakhine people, the Commission pointed out.

Moreover, the Commission also stated that political representation of other ethnic minorities – Mro, Khamwee, Daing-Net, Thet, Kaman, Mramagyi, and Chin, – still remain very low, almost none. At the same time, the Commission pointed out that local populace are feeling that they are excluded from the positions of laying down policies on the extraction of resources and foreign investment in Rakhine and dissatisfied with benefit-sharing from them, as well.

Similarly, Muslims Community should also have representation. The issue is citizenship. There are political parties, formed by the Muslims who are already citizens. However, the vast majority of Muslims, who have not been verified as citizens yet, are not entitled to cast the votes. While there is no political representation for the time being, social representation should be considered.

The Commission pointed out that these fundamental political and economic issues should be taken into consideration in the process of the national peace and that of constitutional reform. Therefore, the Commission suggested that the fundamental issue of Rakhine is the issue dealing with politics and constitution. Only when the root cause of the fundamental issue is resolved, will the problem be settled.
successfully. And, the Commission recognised that solving the fundamental issue will be quite challenging.

Second part of the final report is the political issue. The Commission suggested the resolution of the problem of stateless one million Bengali Muslims. The Commission recognised that while there has been a Muslim community in Rakhine since the times of Rakhine Kings, its size increased rapidly during colonial times.

The Commission stated that, between 1880 and 1930, the size of the Muslim community (as part of the total population of the state) has doubled from about 13 to 25%. Since then, the increase of the Muslim population has slowed down significantly and became around a third of the state’s total population only. This perspective is different from that of the Rakhine ethnic people.

However, the fact that the Commission has pointed out, regarding the Government’s verification process for Muslims, which could not be conducted consecutively, is correct. Strategic performance and specific timeframe are needed, in fact. The longer it takes to solve the problem, the greater the Muslims problem in Rakhine is. So, it is necessary to carry out the verification process, as recommended by the Commission, after consultations that could be accepted by both communities.

Nevertheless, it is a difficult task to review, as recommended by the Commission, the 1982 Citizenship Law. There will be serious objections from the Tatmataw (Military) and the Rakhine ethnic people against the amendment of the said Citizenship Law.

The additional issues, as the third part of the final report of the Commission, are the secondary problems of the first part, the fundamental issues of politics and economics and the second part, the citizenship issue.

In the first part, it is mentioned to resolve the secondary problems of the first part- fundamental issues of politics and economics- such as representation in education, health, justice, security, politics and social sectors and cultural development, which are sector-
wise problems. Even though the fundamental issue is not solved yet, it is needed to enhance the conditions of economy, health, and education in the Rakhine state. As for justice, it is necessary to find out and take legal actions against bribery and corruption of civil servants. It is necessary to be aware of the necessity of further holistic approach on resolving Rakhine issue and problem on using security forces, as the Commission pointed out. It can be said that those means may heal the problem to some extent even if the fundamental issue could not be solved yet.

In the second part, seen as the additional problem of citizenship issue are freedom of movement, IDP issues, humanitarian access and inter-communal cohesion. These problems are related to the citizenship issue. Besides, it is also necessary to consider the IDP issues, health, education, and social problems of Muslims before their verification process is completed.

As for the Humanitarian access, the perspectives from both sides are different. In the report of the Commission, it mainly focused on the failure of humanitarian access for Muslims, while the Rakhine community said that international aids and assistances are not fair and not helpful to Rakhine people. So, as for the humanitarian aids, some fair and transparent plan should be adopted.

Also, the recommendation of the Commission, regarding the freedom of movement before the verification process is completed, has less possibility to be implemented. Although the Commission stated that “freedom of movement should be granted, irrespective of whether they hold the NRC or not, and some informal restrictions for Muslims, locally-practiced in the communities, should be lifted” and “Freedom of movement is the basic right of human beings”, there is, in reality, no country that allows persons without verification documents to move freely. Citizenship issue is the one that should be solved firstly and, there will still exit certain restrictions in freedom of movement before the citizenship issue is entirely solved.
Lifting of informal restrictions in some areas, as the Commission recommended, will not be that easy. Although the Commission did not point out directly for that recommendation, it presumably meant the situation in Taunggok, southern part of Rakhine. In 1982/1983, after the small Rakhine-Bengali conflict had happened, the local elderly placed a particular restriction. That is – the Muslims who were onboard with the ship or vehicles entering Taunggok were not allowed to enter Taunggok and supposed to leave by the vehicles they were onboard.

However, such kinds of restrictions are seen not only in Rakhine, but also in some towns and areas of Myanmar, in various ways. In Pa-Oh self-administrative region, Shan state, people from some village tracts allowed Muslims to visit in day time, but never allowed them to sleep in their villages at night. It can be regarded as the regional response against migration and possible dominance of Muslims. Although such regional informal restrictions placed by local people can be regarded as contrary to the standard of the human rights, it will be difficult for the Government to immediately remove those restrictions which are made by the consent of the majority of local populace.

The Commission also pointed out that the Government is currently practicing the policy to separate the two communities to avoid further conflict, and recommended the cohesion of the communities. However, just as the Commission has stated, after the violence in 2012, mutual mistrusts between the two communities grew. During the following years, while the mutual trust was being built again, the violence by some Muslims in October 2016 broke out and mutual mistrusts grew once again. After the terrorist attack in August 2017, the situation was getting worse and the inter-communal cohesion became the very tough issue. The situation became worse than the lack of mutual trust between two communities.

For the time being, the citizenship problem should be solved first and it may need to take some times to solve the additional issues, so to observe.
The mean for the resolution of the problem, the fourth part of the report, is the subject that needs to be very cautious. The Commission mentioned the resolutions of the problem several times, from the introduction of the report to the conclusion. The importance of seeking understanding of both communities through briefing and discussion and cooperation of all the people in Rakhine, civil societies, religious leaders, political leaders and the Government, hand in hand with one another, are pointed out by the Commission. Accordingly, those who are going to take leading role in solving the Rakhine issue should pay serious attention to what the Commission has emphasized.

In addition, the importance of media freedom is described and the Government should be careful that the public trust will grow lower without the media freedom. The Commission pointed out the importance of the cooperation with Bangladesh and as the ASEAN members have a keen interest on this issue, the Government should duly clarify its policies and actions on Rakhine and ensure the support from the countries in the region, the Commission advised.

As for serious problem, the Commission recommended that the drug smuggling through Maungdaw to Bangladesh became larger and the Government should intensify its efforts to eradicate the drug trafficking since it is reportedly causing youths in the region so much trouble and source of finance for various terrorist groups, and inducing civil servants and security personnel to commit corruption and bribery the most.

So, in the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine state, the fundamental issues of Rakhine state are pointed out and, it is also found out that there are some ways and means which can heal the issues at present. And there are also some problems that cannot be settled for the time being.

**Responses to the Final Report of Kofi Annan Commission**

After the submission of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State led by Kofi Annan, the NLD
Government welcomed the report and the Office of the State Counsellor issued a statement dated 24-9-2017 regarding the final report.

In the statement, it is mentioned that recommendations of the Commission are very welcome and they will be carried out within the shortest timeframe possible based on situation on the ground. Moreover, a new Union Minister-led Committee responsible for the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations and an Advisory Board on Rakhine to assist the Committee will be established. It is also mentioned that there are some progresses in implementing the recommendations made in the Commission’s interim report, and Rakhine issue cannot be resolved overnight and it will take time.

Those who have objected the establishment of the Kofi Annan Commission did not object the whole report of the Commission. However, it can be said that Military, ANP and USDP expressed their strong opposition to one of the Commission’s recommendations – to review and amend the 1982 Citizenship Law. The Commander-in-Chief made a remark that some facts in the Commission’s report are not consistent with the situation on the ground. However, those who have objected the establishment of the Commission did not object the implementation of the recommendations and they are just in the status of observers.

It can be said that those who strongly objected the final report is the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), who have recruited the Bengali Muslims by persuading and threatening. The Kofi Annan Commission released the final report on 24 August 2017. Between night of that date and early morning of 25 August 2017, ARSA launched several coordinated attacks on 30 Border Guard Police outposts and a light infantry headquarter in Maungdaw and Buthidung, showing that they will neither accept nor wait for the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.
Kofi Annan Commission and Subsequent Issue

As the situation in Rakhine state has tremendously changed after the release of the Kofi Annan Commission’s report, it is required to consider the subsequent issues which are not included in the report.

Starting from the night of the date when the Commission has released the report, there were several attacks in different parts of Maungdaw launched by ARSA, an insurgent group of extremist Bengali Muslims. The Government officially released the statement that the counter-operations of the Government security forces were carried out up to 5 September 2017.

It is the refugee issue that has quickly emerged along with the terrorists attacks. With the accusations of the usage of excessive force by Myanmar security personnel, the Bengalis said that their houses were burnt down and they had to flee to Bangladesh. But the version of incidents stated by the Government and the Military – after the terrorist attacks, the Bengalis themselves set fire to their homes and fled to Bangladesh - was contradicted by the accounts given by the Bengalis. While both sides made accusations against one another, hundred thousands of refugees have arrived in Bangladesh.

The surprising fact was that the Bengali Muslims kept fleeing to Bangladesh even after all clashes have halted in the beginning of September 2017. The Bengalis gave the reason why that they were threatened by the Military and the Rakhine people. However, it is presumable that they had already premeditated, even before the beginning of the rainy season in 2017, to launch attacks and flee to Bangladesh. In addition, there were many reports that the Bengalis from the villages where no attacks broken out nor homes were set fire, were threatened by ARSA and Moulvis to abandon their homes and flee to Bangladesh. Thus, starting from the mid-September to the beginning of November 2017, the Bengali Muslims from Maungdaw and Buthidaung kept fleeing to Bangladesh in groups gradually and the United Nations reports said that there were around six hundred thousand Bengali refugees arriving in Bangladesh. Subsequently, the
issue of six hundred thousand refugees sheltering in Bangladesh, which was not mentioned in the Kofi Annan Commission’s report, became the additional problem for the Government of Myanmar.

On 12 September 2017, Government of Myanmar set up a Committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine state. And on 19 September 2017, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of Myanmar, announced that the refugee issue will be settled in accord with the 1993 Myanmar-Bangladesh Agreement. Then, on 12 October 2017, she introduced the three main tasks for the Rakhine State.

The first task is to provide humanitarian assistance effectively and to receive back those who have crossed over to Bangladesh. The second task is to resettle and rehabilitate. The third task is to bring about stability in the state and ensure durable peace. As a mechanism to implement these three tasks, “Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine” has been established and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi acts as Chairperson. Dr. Win Myat Aye (Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement) acts as Vice Chairman.

In the 1993 Myanmar-Bangladesh Agreement on the repatriation of refugees, which is firmly adhered by Government of Myanmar, it was stated that the returnee must be the one who was born in Myanmar; must have evidence of their residence in Myanmar; must be voluntary return, and must not be anti-Government of Myanmar. Basically, regarding the repatriation of Bengalis and the citizenship, Government of Myanmar considers them like the ones who have migrated to Myanmar during the colonial period.

Previously, both Myanmar and Bangladesh Governments could have negotiated and resolved the refugee crisis for two times and Government of Myanmar is carrying out with the hope that the third repatriation will also be successful. Although it has been recommended to review the 1982 Citizenship Law in the final report of the Kofi Annan Commission, the citizenship problem is to be solved in accord
with that law. Government of Myanmar is trying to resolve the problem by considering it as the domestic issue.

However, it should be aware that the terrorist attack by ARSA is mixed with political agendas, rather than a mere violence. In the series of attacks launched in different locations of Maungdaw, ARSA forcibly recruited the Bengali civilians to participate in the attacks, by persuading and threatening. Perhaps, the intention of the ARSA might be portraying that the uprising of the Bengali Muslims civilians occurred because they can no longer withstand the oppression and rebelled with whatever weapons they could take up. Contrary to other insurgent groups in Myanmar, ARSA is not organized like a paramilitary targeting the security forces. The innocent Bengali Muslims civilians were ruthlessly used as pawns by ARSA in the attacks. So, it is basically different from other ethnic armed groups who protect their ethnic people.

Even though some reports said that ARSA has linkage with international terrorist organizations, they are ill-equipped. During their attacks, they mainly used hand-made mines and bombs. A one-month unilateral ceasefire was declared by ARSA on 9 September 2017, in an attempt to allow humanitarian actors safe access into northern Rakhine State. Despite the end of ceasefire on 9 October 2017, there were no sign of any new attacks by ARSA. Instead of new attacks, they issued a press release in which it was mentioned that they offer their humble services to cooperate with the UN and the international community to end this ongoing Bengali refugee crisis. So, it is needed to consider how they intend to carry the crisis to the future.

Firstly, the organizations representing Bengali Muslims could have successfully propagandized via international media and various international organizations, over the past five years, that they are the Rohingyas ethnic people who have settled down in Rakhine State since 7th century A.D. Then, the Rohingyas were recognized as victims of human rights violation, whether they have settled in Rakhine since the time immemorial or not. The international community wrongly
misinterpreted that the using of the term “Rohingya” can make the person proud as the supporter of human rights and democracy.

Secondly, it cannot be assumed as a simple incident that ARSA has tried six hundred thousand refugees to flee to Bangladesh after the terrorist attacks. It is considered that they transformed the incident, by using the attention of international community which they have gained in the recent years, into the international issue, which shall be resolved through the involvement of international community.

Thirdly, although the Western countries, OIC Islamic countries and UN organizations condemned the terrorist attack of ARSA, they expressed their firm stand with the Bengalis concerning the Bengali refugee crisis and largely condemned the Government of Myanmar and Military. In condemning the Military, they focused on the weaknesses in handling domestic security issues and conducting military operations in the regions of ethnic people. They also condemned for the lack of press freedom. Eventually, even the Government of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was condemned, accused of not-standing with democracy and human rights. So, the ARSA will consider the international condemnation that Government of Myanmar and Military facing as their upper hand and they might apply it more in the future.

Fourthly, despite ARSA’s attempt to portray the problem as an international issue, they have been declared as the terrorist group by the Government, their demand to negotiate with the Government will never be complied. Furthermore, as ARSA is responsible for the massacre of Hindus and other innocent local ethnic people, it will never become a political organization. So, they are now in the position of waiting for the assistance from international terrorist organization and it can be considered that they cannot escalate the violent attacks presently. However, it is still a terrorist group that everyone has to be seriously cautious.

As for fifth factor, it was found out that the usages of English language in the press statements which ARSA terrorist group
80

periodically releases are surprisingly excellent. So, there is no doubt about their linkage with other Bengali organizations from international community. Moreover, although international organizations that officially support ARSA currently may not support terrorist attack, they will surely support the solution with political pressure. Under such circumstances, it is quite sure that ARSA will be sent behind and organizations which will depict the issue as the international one by political means will definitely come forward. Currently, Washington-based Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU) led by Waka Uddin was found active in association with the US Government Officials and international organizations. Besides, other organizations may arise too.

As for sixth factor, although it is better to solve the problem politically, the political track headed for by the organizations, which supposedly represent Bengalis and the preparedness of the Government are different. The preparedness of Government is to receive and resettle the returnees; to resolve the citizenship issue; solve as the human right issue. The Government intends to solve the problem as the domestic one. As for the organizations representing Bengali Muslims, they appear to be trying to demand for ethnic right and self-administration with their stance of being Rohingya indigenous ethnic group. In addition, they also seem to be trying to resolve the issue, by grabbing international support, as the international crisis like Kosovo.

Therefore, the third repatriation of displaced persons may not be easy and quick. The Government of Myanmar will firstly face the preparing to meet their political demands with the international support, by using massive refugees group. It is necessary for the Government to clearly resolve the issue as the citizenship problem for foreign migrants or the problem of ethnic people, rather than just mentioning “Muslim community and Buddhist community” in Rakhine state. Furthermore, it is assumed that the issue may become the compulsory one to be considered or the fundamental issue for resolving the Bengali issue.

It can be said that the Bengali issue is the ill heritage of British colonial era as there arose conflicts among the two communities, which were different from language, culture and religion, due to the forcible
relocation of massive workers from India subcontinent for the sake of colonialists’ interest. Also, the 1942 Rakhine-Bengali conflict, which occurred when the administrative mechanism was collapsed during the Second World War, left a deep scar over the ill heritage of British colonial era. Moreover, as the successive governments have failed to consistently resolve the Bengali issue in Rakhine State through fair approach after gaining the independence in 1948, the issue became worse and difficult to solve.

However, it was mentioned that the Muslim migrants are not only in Rakhine state, but also millions of them are present in the mainland. However, it was well solved as the citizenship issue and the citizen right issue. So, the Bengali issue in Rakhine state should also be similarly solved based on such experience. The unusual thing of the Bengali issue in Rakhine state is that there might be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh as it is sharing the border with Myanmar. So, it should be thoroughly considered.

Besides, the menace of terrorism should be considered in resolving the Bengali issue in Rakhine state. It is also necessary to consider the involvement of other international Muslims extremist terrorists, apart from ARSA. When the issues of Muslims communities from Afghanistan to Syria are initially observed, the resolutions tend to be struck from the perspective of violation of human rights and democracy. However, it needs to be cautious that only extremist terrorist organizations from Taliban to ISIS out of those Muslim communities became stronger later.

Nevertheless, as UN and the Western countries are currently supporting the implementation of recommendations in the final report of Kofi Annan Commission, the report cannot be disregarded, so to mention.

**Terrorist attacks in Maungdaw**

Starting from the night of 24 August 2017, the date on which the Kofi Annan Commission release the final report, the ARSA
terrorists launched the coordinated attacks on 30 police outposts and an army headquarters. The terrorists used thousands of combatants for the said attacks, assigning a group of hundred people each for attacking one outpost. They appeared to have prepared to launch the more fierce attacks than the one in October 2016. Over the period between the night of 24 August and the whole day of 25 August 2017, there were 38 clashes and a total of 12 people from Government side, one soldier, ten policemen, and one Immigration official lost their lives, leaving some injured and six arms were grabbed by the terrorists. During the clashes, two ARSA terrorists were captured alive and 77 terrorists were killed.

Those attacks severely occurred from 25 August 2017 to 5 September 2017. According to the statements released by the Government and the Military, there were 97 clashes between ARSA and Security Forces and a total of 15 people from the Government side, 13 security personnel and 2 civil servants, lost their lives, and 15 security personnel and 3 civil servants were wounded. As for ARSA terrorist group, 371 bodies of terrorists were recovered and 38 terrorists were captured alive.

During the clashes in Maungdaw, it was found out later that there were not only the causalities from both the Government and terrorist sides, but also many innocent civilians were murdered by the terrorists. According to the earlier reports, 14 Rakhine ethnic people, 7 Hindu faiths and 7 Bengalis lost their lives due to the raids and murders committed by the ARSA terrorists. Later, it has been informed that more than 90 Hindus from Ye Baw Kya village, near Kha Maung Seik, were massacred by ARSA. On 24 and 25 September 2017, mass graves buried the corpses of 45 Hindus were discovered. Some Hindus are still missing.

The list of the victims who were brutally murdered by the terrorists, from October 2016 to 24 August 2017, was released by the Government as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murdered</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration members</th>
<th>Murdered</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic people</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rakhine/ Mro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innocent civilians</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security personnel</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The missing 37 people may be assumed dead and 116 people were reportedly murdered. The innocent civilians include the Bengali village tract administrators and librarians, who were believed to be in cooperation with Government and murdered by the terrorists.

The list of the victims who were brutally murdered by the terrorists, from 25 August 2017 to 26 September 2017, is released by the Government as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Murdered</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration members</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic people</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Hindu/ Rakhine/ Mro/ Daing Net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security personnel</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, 163 civilians and security personnel reportedly lost their lives and 91 people were captured/missing, (totaling 254 people), from October 2016 to September 2017. The Military has released official statement that 371 bodies of ARSA terrorists were recovered and 38 terrorists were captured alive. Local civil society organisations presumed that there may be more casualties of terrorists than the numbers mentioned in the statement, but they could not mention the exact number for that. UN Special Rapporteur Yang Hee Lee predicted that around one thousand Bengalis might have been killed.

Soon after the violent attacks of ARSA terrorist group has started, the people who have faced the troubles first, are the local ethnic people, like Rakhine, Daing Net, and Mro. In Maungdaw, the Rakhine
villages are relatively small and exist between the larger Bengali villages. After the police outposts that conduct security coverage for them were attacked, there was no one, who can protect their lives, any longer. It was very frightening for them to hear the clarion call to fight from nearby Bengali villages. Besides, ARSA terrorists destroyed the unprotected villages of ethnic people and they had to flee into the jungle where they missed their meals for four to five days.

It was found out that the villages with small security forces combined with one another. As one village in Northern Maungdaw, where the Nanthataung welfare monastery for 400 students was located, had a few security forces, they had to go and combine with other security outpost in Taungpyo Letwe due to the inability to dispatch security reinforcement for them. After that, ARSA terrorists destroyed and burnt down the Nanthataung monastery and the whole village. ARSA Terrorists destroyed not only the Rakhine villages but also the villages of Hindus and Kathay (Manipuris). Due to the brave resistance of Kathay villagers, ARSA terrorists were wounded and fled away. 7 innocent Hindu faiths were brutally murdered by the terrorists at the office under construction near the entry of Maungdaw. Later, it was found out later that ARSA had massacred the Hindu faiths from Ye Baw Kya village, northern part of Maungdaw, where the security coverage was out of reach.

Within few days after the violent attacks, the local ethnic people and the Hindu faiths abandoned their homes and all fled to the safer places. According to the official statement released by the Government, there were 26,747 ethnic people and Hindus, who were displaced to the safer areas such as Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Sittwe, from 25 August 2017 to September 5 2017. The number in the statement was also confirmed by the Rakhine Civil Societies who were implementing the humanitarian assistance on ground. All the Bengali refuges were displaced to Bangladesh.

Moreover, according to the reports of the Government and on-ground information, 59 villages and 6,842 houses were burnt down and 8 bridges were exploded by the terrorists until 5 September 2017.
There had been multiple accusations against one another for burning down thousands of houses. The Government and the Military blamed the Bengali terrorists for committing arson on their own homes, themselves and the Bengalis, reciprocally, accused that their homes were burnt down by some Rakhine people and security forces. There might be setting fire to the homes of both sides in the violent attacks inspired by deep grudge and hatred against one another. However, with regard to the explosion of eight bridges, there was no counter-accusation against the Military and the Rakhine people.

During the time of terrorist attacks, it was found out that Myanmar embassies stationed in foreign countries were also attacked. On 3 September 2017, a petrol bomb was thrown at Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia and the attack seemed to be perpetrated by the supporters of ARSA. Additionally, there also happened a small explosion near the Myanmar Embassy in Cairo, which was later claimed by an Egyptian militant group, namely Hasm in support of ARSA.

**ARSA extremist terrorist group**

ARSA is currently led by Ataullah abu Ammar Jununi, a Bengali descendent who was born in Pakistan. Bertil Lintner, an expert on Myanmar issues, pointed out that ARSA is masterminded by Abdus Qadoos Burmi, a Pakistan-born Bengali descendent who has a link with “Lashkar-e-Taiba”, or the Army of the Righteous, based in Pakistan. Currently, Lashkar-e-Taiba is one of the South Asia’s largest Islamic terrorist organizations, which was founded in 1987 in Afghanistan with the funding from deceased Al Qaeda founder “Osama bin Laden”. The experts assumed that ARSA has links to foreign extremist groups from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and some countries from Arab World.

After the violent attacks in Maungdaw, Myanmar's Anti-Terrorism Central Committee declared ARSA as “terrorist group” on 25 August. A one-month unilateral ceasefire was declared by ARSA in
the beginning September 2017, with the aim of ensuring safe relocation of the refugees. Despite the ceasefire ending on 9 October 2017, the ARSA released the statement that they support resolutions of the United Nations and will negotiate with Government of Myanmar. The Union Minister for Defense instantly rejected their proposal, stating, "We have no policy to negotiate with the terrorists."

The assaults launched by the ARSA evidenced that they are not well-equipped. They mainly used home-made mines. ARSA has recruited and trained 20 to 25 villagers each from a Bengali village, and ordered them to launch terror attacks, by persuading or threatening. It can be, therefore, said that they are strong enough to influence over Bengali villages even though they do not have sufficient arms and ammunitions.

In contrast with other ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, ARSA seemed not willing to organize like a paramilitary based in specific area and fight against the Government’s security forces. Their main objective is to create the political issue of the region by launching a series of coordinated attacks to security forces, along with the civilians from Bengali villages who were recruited by either persuasion or threatening by few well-trained ARSAs. At the same time, ARSA intends to grab the lands by expelling the ethnic minorities of different faiths through threatening and murdering.

Bertil Lintner, a correspondent and an expert on Myanmar issues, also pointed out that, “Although ARSA’s aim was supposedly to “protect the Rohingyas (Bengalis)”, its attacks backfired horribly. However, ARSA might have already calculated the consequences of their attacks that they will face afterwards. Due to those attacks, miseries of Rohingyas could draw the attention of the International community. It looks promising for assistance from the Arab and Muslim world, and the angry youth to recruit more for the terrorist act.”

Presently, ARSA seems willing to solve the issue politically with the support of international community. However, the Government already declared ARSA a terrorist organisation, and the
Military announced that they already have lists of names and villages of 2,222 people involved in the terror attacks launched by ARSA. Therefore, ARSA has no chance to negotiate with the Government by their current name. But, there might be some new attempts by Bengalis to negotiate by other organization name.

Especially, after 1988 uprising, Bengalis tried to take part in the political movements in Myanmar and ethnic coalition forces by using so-called Rohingya organizations, but there was no achievement. Also, ethnic armed groups did not accept them. Earlier, they could make alliance with some Rakhine guerillas in Rakhine State but it lasted for a short time. So, it can be seen that they are trying harder to gain the international support, rather than internal support. Meanwhile, organizations like Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU) led by Wakar Uddin are active with the support from United Nations, human rights organizations from western countries and OIC member states.

Unavoidably, ASRA will link with such organizations. ARSA may probably continue to carry out terror attacks as much as it could. The explosion occurred in northern part of Maungdaw on 21 October 2019, claiming lives of two Daing Net ethnic people and leaving the other two seriously injured, reflects the act of ARSA terrorists. ARSA may probably carry out other bombing attacks including such kind of small scale attacks, in future.

**Government, Military and Maungdaw violence**

It can be said that Maungdaw violence in August 2017 was the ill consequence of mismanagement by the successive Governments of Myanmar. On the other hand, it can also be said that the newly-elected NLD Government had to unfortunately inherit that ill heritage. Besides, the NLD Government could not seize the initiative to well manage and control the situation of Maungdaw that is changing rapidly while awaiting for the final report of Kofi Annan Commission. There were no representatives from Maungdaw and northern Rakhine in the NLD Government and *Hluttaw* (Parliament). There was no
engagement or consultations between the representatives from those constituencies and the NLD Government, too. The Union-level Parliaments, which are dominated by NLD majority, could not have supported the Government by establishing the specific inquiry committee, regarding the Bengali issue. The Parliaments seems to be waiting for the Kofi Annan Commission.

As for the Military, although a division was dispatched 15 days prior to the terror attacks, they could not conduct sufficient security coverage in the beginning when the terrorists launched attacks. The focus of the Military might probably be on the Paletwa Township, where Rakhine militants from Arakan Army were active, rather than Maungdaw Region. The terrorist attacks compelled small BGP outposts to join forces with each other. Most people observed that no prior information of the main attack was received. As for the Government, prevalence of administrative power of the General Administration Department, at both district and township levels, on Bengali villages has gradually collapsed, after the terror attacks in October 2016. The administrative officials could not enter and control the Bengali villages. As for the security personnel, they are no longer able to control the mechanism for seeking intelligence and information gathering.

After the violent attacks, Maungdaw was declared as the operation area. There broke out several clashes in different locations of Maungdaw, for at least ten days. On 12 September 2017, the Implementation Committee for the recommendations on Rakhine State comprising 15 members was established with the signature of the President U Htin Kyaw, chaired by Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye and co-chaired by Rakhine state Chief Minister U Nyi Pu.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under the international pressure for Bengali issue in Rakhine, held a diplomatic briefing at Nay Pyi Taw on 19 September 2017. Much as her launguage, reflecting the particular status of being neutral, did not satisfy the diplomats, people from the mainland fully supported her. In addition, despite her attempt to make the audience aware of the main
issue of Myanmar by entitling as “Briefing on the Government’s efforts with regard to National Reconciliation and Peace”, the diplomats from western countries mainly focused on Bengali issue only. It can be thus said that her aim was not achieved.

While the Government was trying to implement the recommendations of Kofi Annan Commission, hundred thousands of Bengali refugees displaced to Bangladesh and that issue became a priority to be resolved. Subsequently, State Counsellor delivered a direct speech to the people on 12 October 2017, highlighting three main tasks—

1. Providing humanitarian assistance effectively and repatriation of those who have crossed over to Bangladesh
2. Resettlement and rehabilitation
3. Bringing about regional development and ensuring durable peace

Moreover, she also invited the organizations from home and abroad and individuals to kindly assist and cooperate in the implementation of the tasks by manpower or cash contribution. As a mechanism to implement these three tasks, “Union Enterprise for Humantarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD)” has been established on 17 October 2017, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi acts as Chairperson; Dr. Win Myat Aye acts as Vice Chairman; Dr. Aung Tun Thet acts as Chief Coordinator and U Kyaw Myaing acts as the Information and Communication Director. The local entrepreneurs donated 17.7 billion kyats for UEHRD projects on 20 October 2017.

Donations were previously made to the Military for the Rakhine state before the Committee was established, and it remains still unclear that there will be joint cooperation or separate implementation. Although the Government has established several committees for Rakhine state, the representatives for Rakhine state were not included nor invited to consult. Thus, it would be quite difficult for implementing the projects, so to guess.
The Military reduced the operations and withdrew some troops from Maungdaw on 26 October 2017, and withdrawn troops were regrouped in Sittwe as reserve forces. It can be assumed as the response to international pressure.

The Government rejected the request made by the UN to investigate on ground regarding the accusations on the excessive use of security forces and alleged human rights violations during the operations in October 2016 and August 2017. Instead, the Government announced that necessary actions will be taken, in accord with the existing laws and regulations, through the investigations made by the Maungdaw Investigation Commission established on 1 December 2016, led by Vice-president U Myint Swe, the Military investigation team established on 17 February 2017, led by Inspector-General of Defense Services Lt-Gen Aye Win, and the investigation team established on 9 February 2017, led by Police Brig-Gen. Win Tun of Myanmar Police Force. Despite the said domestic probing mechanisms, it would be hard to avoid the ongoing international pressure.

**International Pressure and Refugee Issue**

Soon after the Government declared ARSA the terrorist organisation in the aftermaths of the terror attacks on 25 August 2017, the international community also released the press statements to condemn the violent attacks, respectively. Later, the western countries and OIC member states directly focused on the Government of Myanmar and the Military to put more pressure, rather than condemning the terrorism and violent attack. Such pressures were based on the accusations such as excessive use of security forces to forcibly expel the Bengalis and State Counsellor’s not standing with Bengali refugees.

Later, the western countries reduced the pressure on State Counsellor and put more pressure on the Military, instead. In the end of October 2017, the United States imposed sanctions targeting the
Myanmar military commanders. But it was just the action taken to condemn and criticize, rather than the action taken to harm practically.

Here, it is also needed to consider the democracy transition and national reconciliation process of Myanmar. Without achieving those processes, there will be little chance to resolve the Bengali issue in Rakhine. Currently, the western countries do not consider the priority process or the key of political solution and they put the human right issue of Bengalis to the fore, not in consistent with the current situation of Myanmar.

It is not unusual for the Myanmar Military to face that sort of condemnation since it have previously face several condemnations from home and abroad dealing with the suppression of local uprisings and operations in the regions of ethnic people. But it is also necessary to condemn the ARSA terrorists who massacred the innocent ethnic people and Hindu faiths, if it is to condemn the Myanmar Military for using excessive force. If not, it can be regarded as biased condemnation.

There is no doubt about the need to resolve the issue of displaced persons in Bangladesh. But, as for the reason of displacement of those people, it should not solely put the blame on the excessive use of security forces. Although it may be said that the displacement during the clashes happened because of the excessive use of security forces, fleeing of massive refugees to Bangladesh after the clashes had ended is attributed to the threatening of ARSA and its political agenda to create an international issue. The villagers from large Bengali villages where there occurred no clash or conflict started to flee from 5 September 2017 and kept leaving incessantly until the beginning of November 2017. Under such circumstance, only when the motive of creating the political issue by ARSA’s forcible displacement of the refugees is also considered, will it be absolutely fair, not depending on only the fact that security forces were excessively used. It is also necessary to consider the human rights issue of Bengalis as well as the menace of terrorism.
It can also be seen that it is very unusual that the western countries expressed their overly concern over the Rakhine issue although they did their mere concern with little interest on the issues of the Shan state and Kachin state where the Military used relatively larger forces and heavy artillery than in the Rakhine state and hundred thousand people were internally displaced. Besides, that is also the fact that the ethnic people in Myanmar are disappointed with.

Anyhow, Myanmar is currently facing unavoidable pressure from western countries for the ongoing Bengali issue. The Government should practically do the right things and stand with the friendly countries. The relieving fact for Myanmar is that China, India, Russia and Japan understand well Myanmar with great sympathy and make no condemnation on the Bengali issue whereas the western countries intensify their pressures on Myanmar in this regard.

Nevertheless, the world’s largest refugee camp near the border area in the territory of Bangladesh, sheltering some six hundred thousand refugees, will still remain as the issue seizing the attention of international community. It is the issue that is needed to be resolved and properly dealt with. However, it would be not that easy.

Media and Bengali issue

Currently, the upper hand for the Bengalis, who described themselves as Rohingyas, is that portraying that they are pathetic people facing discrimination and human rights violation is more dominant in the mainstream of Western news media. World media reports are prevailed over by the excessive use of force and atrocities committed by Myanmar security forces whereas the heinous crimes committed by ARSA are being downplayed. It happened because of the two main reasons. First reason is that Bengalis have been conducting Rohingya propaganda project, taking much time for several years. The other is due to the problem of press freedom in Myanmar.

As for the first reason, the Bengalis have been propagandizing by spending huge amount of money for several years. In their
propaganda, they used complex mixture of correct and fake news and images. Even the Turkish deputy prime minister was misinformed by the fake images of Rohingyas, and so, how much propaganda was spread among the average community can be imagined. Bengalis received supports and assistances from Muslim countries through those propagandas and they were also able to obtain the support from western countries under the pretext of democracy and human rights. It is presumable that they have spent huge amount of money for the propaganda campaign. The key points for the reason of the spread of their propaganda were the lack of stable and consistent Governmental policy for Bengali issue in Rakhine; the longer period of military regime, and there appeared to be two governments running in the country at present, which was also the biggest subject to be pointed out. Owing to such propaganda, the Bengali could mislead some people into thinking that will they be recognized as the protector of democracy and human rights only when they used the terminology “Rohingya”.

The second reason is the problem of press freedom in Myanmar. Despite the civilian government taking office currently, there are still some limitations in the press freedom of Myanmar. There still remain some restrictions for the media access to Maungdaw. The correspondents and the diplomats can conduct media access only with the arrangement of the Government. That makes Statements of the Government confirmed news. Lack of press freedom makes Myanmar at a discount. The Kofi Annan Commission pointed out that media restriction may mean Myanmar’s authorities have something to hide, and only full transparency is the most effective way to describe the real situation on ground.

Rakhine state and Bengali issue

For the time being, there are complex multiple perspectives towards the Bengali issue in Rakhine State. While Myanmar is grappling with the prime tasks that include role of NLD and the Military on the national reconciliation path, Union Peace Conference,
and building the Federal Union, the Bengali issue in Rakhine emerged, taking the top spot and generated different perspectives, various stances and complexity in politics of Myanmar.

The paradoxes arose in the standards of democracy and human rights, and the citizenship issue. Subjects on between the Bengali issue and NLD government and between the Military and Bengali issue were emphasized by critics and people. The criticisms came out of the perceptions that the NLD Government is presently resolving the Bengali issue in Rakhine state and the Military is directly handling the security matters of Rakhine state. In so doing, there were different perspectives owing to the different approaches from the side supporting NLD Government, the side against the NLD Government, the side supporting the Military, the side against the Military, the side against the 2008 Constitution and Military Dictatorship.

Much as NLD Government and the Military are obviously involved in resolving the Bengali issue in Rakhine, they are not the root cause of the issue at all. The fundamental issue in the Bengali issue of the Rakhine State is the one between the Rakhine ethnic people and the Bengalis, and the one that should be resolved as main priority. Only when the fundamental issue is thoughtfully dealt with paying special attention, will the very Bengali issue be able to be resolved from its root.