

14 AUG 1998

Razali-Myanmar

RAZALI ISMAIL APPOINTED U.N. SPECIAL ENVOY TO MYANMAR

By: Azman Ujang

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations Tan Sri Razali Ismail has been appointed UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy to Myanmar.

Confirming this today, Razali said he had sought the advice of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on the appointment and Dr Mahathir had given him the green light to take up the job.

" My mission to Myanmar is to try to defuse the areas of conflict between the Myanmar government and supporters of (opposition leader) Aung San Suu Kyi," Razali told Bernama here.

" I am happy to take up this mission as it is the hope of the UN Secretary-General that there can be a dialogue between the Myanmar authorities and Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters," he said.

But Razali said he would not be able to go to Myanmar yet as the authorities in Yangon had still not given permission for the mission to enter the country.

" The mission's trip to Myanmar is being deferred but I hope I can go when the situation permits," he said.

Razali's appointment came in the wake of a new stand-off in Myanmar between the military-led government and Aung San Suu Kyi, who today staged a roadside confrontation for the second day after being blocked from meeting her provincial supporters.

Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), was prevented from meeting her supporters outside the Myanmar capital last month and had to spend six days in a car before officials forced her to return home.

Reports from Yangon said it was her fourth failed attempt to travel to meet her provincial supporters in little over a month.

Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party won the 1990 general election by a landslide only to see the military government refusing to hand over power, has demanded that the government convene by Aug 24 the Parliament elected in 1990 or face "unspecified consequences".

The UN in a recent statement on Myanmar urged the government to work with Aung San Suu Kyi to resolve the current stand-off peacefully and quickly.

" This incident provides stark evidence of the need for the government to enter into a frank and sincere dialogue with civil society in Myanmar as a way of overcoming the political difficulties the country is facing," it said.

The UN also called on Yangon to guarantee the rights of freedom of movement and association of all citizens and to accelerate the process of national reconciliation leading to the enjoyment of all human rights.

Razali retired as Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the UN in March this year after eight years during which he also served for a year as President of the UN General Assembly.

Meanwhile, Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said today the Myanmar government's refusal to accept the visit of Razali's special mission to the country was an "unfriendly and un-Asean act".

Lim, who is also DAP Secretary-General, said the Malaysian government should convey its displeasure to the Myanmar government's refusal to allow the mission into the country.

He said the Malaysian government and Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) could not remain silent at the "deterioration of the political situation" in Myanmar.

This was especially because Malaysia and Asean had justified the admission of Myanmar into the regional grouping as conducive to promoting democracy and human rights in the country.

Myanmar was admitted into Asean at the Asean Foreign Ministers' meeting here in July last year.

-- BERNAMA

AU TS