



Civil war, crumbling infrastructure and citizens' unending woes in Myanmar



The Asian Tribune
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COUNTRY IN CRISIS: POVERTY, INFLATION, SUFFERING & VIOLENCE

Myanmar is in deep crisis. The citizens are suffering as inflation is rising, manufacturing has been affected badly due to years of political turmoil. Thousands have lost their lives in the conflict that has shaken the country over the last few years, especially, after the military coup. The repression has led to a climate of fear. Army had over after a coup on February 1, 2021. The government led by Aung San Suu Kyi was overthrown.

Dissidents were arrested and jailed. Meanwhile, the ethnic armed organizations and resistance forces like People's Defence Force (PDF) and Arakan Army, Kachin Independence Army kept on fighting in different regions. This fragmentation led to a situation that at one point junta controlled just 21% of territory while resistance maintained hold over 42% of the country's land. The SAC is at the helm in Myanmar. As army's governing

body, it resorted to harsh measures that included air strikes. The villages were burnt, people were killed and opposition leaders were detained. China's tilt towards junta has emboldened the regime. But this has done little to improve the situation. Tens of millions are in dire need of aid. Unemployment has grown in a big way and the country has become poor. The economy is in shambles and the institutions are crumbling.

The repression is severe and it includes raids, torture and killings. Food scarcity is affecting the citizens and still there is no sign of any positive change. Western countries have been raising the issue of atrocities during junta regime and sanctions have been imposed, the country is caught in a vicious cycle of violence. (Complete report inside)

Scientist whose research led to the first high-yielding Pusa 1 & Pusa 44 varieties, boosting India's rice export, benefiting farmers

EA Siddiq's work in genetics & plant breeding brought up high-yielding rice varieties like dwarf basmati variety, Pusa Basmati 1 & several others, which led to increase in India's basmati rice export, in process, passing the benefits to farmers.

Shams Ur Rehman Alavi

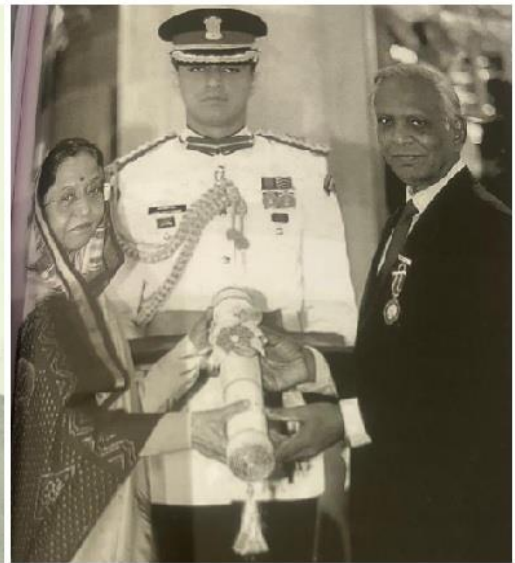
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EA Siddiq is among the leading scientists of the country and he is widely respected for his research in the field of agricultural research.

Hailing from Tamil Nadu, Siddiq, had a tough life in his early years and it was a long journey for him—from an unprivileged childhood to becoming a researcher and scientist of high repute.

His research on genetic research & applied breeding of rice, for improving the yield and quality, led to development of several high-yielding rice varieties including Pusa 1 and quick maturing varieties like Pusa 2-21, Pusa 33, Pusa 4 and Pusa 834.

Siddiq was born in 1937. He hails from village Ilayangudi in Ramanathapuram, which now falls under the newly carved out Sivaganga district. He was brought up by his mother, as his father was in Burma during the World War II. His mother wanted him to excel in studies. She passed away but EAS carried forward the dream and worked hard. After a degree in Bioscience (Trichy), he devoted himself to genetics & plant breeding. In his book, EAS has written about his life and the painful phase. Today, he is acclaimed worldwide for his contribution in the field of agriculture. But he remains a man who is humble to the hilt and is rooted to the ground.



EA Siddiq receiving the Padma Award from President of India, Pratibha Patil.

"I always admire two of his significant contributions—innovative breeding approaches that enabled him evolve the world's first high yielding dwarf statured basmati rice variety Pusa Basmati 1 that provided the plant type base for a few more to follow and increased by many folds, India's basmati rice export and the variety of Pusa 44 that by virtue of its amenability to combine harvest is sustaining the most productive rice-wheat system in north western segment of the Indo Gangetic plains."

***MS Swaminathan, renowned geneticist & architect of green revolution in India, about EA Siddiq's work in the field of science, its importance & impact.**

Legendary MS Swaminathan has this to say about EA Siddiq,

"I always admired two of his significant contributions—innovative breeding approaches that enabled him evolve the world's first high yielding dwarf statured basmati rice variety Pusa Basmati 1 that provided the plant type base for a few more to follow and increased by many folds, India's basmati rice export and the variety Pusa-44 that by virtue of its amenability to combine harvest is sustaining the most

productive rice-wheat system demonstrations, speak of in the north western segment his research managerial efficiency".

As the Project Director, ICAR-Indian Institute of Rice Research, Hyderabad brought him numerous awards like Om Prakash Bhasin award, Norman Borlaug Award, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai prize, INSA Medal & many others. He was member of PM's scientific advisory council too.

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Cuisine, cutlery & 'chashak': Food tasters, cooks & history of fragrant food in Awadh

Heritage Lane

Awadh, the region that is part of central Uttar Pradesh, is known for its unique cuisine. Traditionally, these delicacies were prepared & later served to guests on a *dastar-khaan* (cotton sheet) laid on the *takht* (four leg hard surface made of wood) with four bedposts at each corner so that the breeze, won't affect the *dastar-khaan* and it was on this sheet of cloth, plates and bowls were laid for the food to be served in.

The plates had a significance and were peculiar in nature. They had multiple qualities--like the family members and guests ate in the plates and could detect the change if there was a harmful substance or poison in the food, thereby protect themselves from any conspiracy or an enemy's evil plan.

Awadh has been known for preparation of rich food and the region stands out in the techniques used in cooking--exotic food with flavour and taste that is matchless. Apart from Awadh, Delhi and Hyderabad too had such traditions of food but the *mughlai* food of Awadh reigned supreme. The reason is the effort in the method of cooking, preparation and the manner in which cooking was turned into an art. There were three classes of cooks who prepared the savoury dishes. The first category of cooks belonged to the class that was responsible for washing the *deg*, *mahi tawaz* and *kafgeer* used in cooking. This class was known as *deg shor* and they



Photo: Prashant Gautam, Pexels

were men who were responsible for the initial process and preparation of the food, before the chef's arrival on the scene.

The next category was the *bawarchi*, who was mainly responsible for cooking large amount of food in the *deg* and *maahi tawaz*. Then, the third category was the *rakaab daars* who were mainly responsible for cooking small *haandi*.

Truly speaking, these were the ones who used to try new recipes of food to arouse the interest of the members of the household as well as that of the guests. They had the expertise in laying food in plates and bowls in style and they presented food in a way that it appeared appetizing and also drew attention of the guests.

The fourth was *naan-baai* who skillfully prepared the *sheermaal*, *chapaati*, *kulcha* and other form of unique *rotis*.

Pulao, *biryani*, *qorma*, *kabab* are among the few dishes that are widely known but each of these dishes also

have varieties and versions that are different and draw instant attention due to their aroma as well as rich taste.

Transportation was tough in the past and people stayed at *caravanserais*. More affordable was food at *bhatiyar-khanas*.

Pulao and *biryani* are different dishes. The rice in *pulao* is not colored with saffron.

The spices are put into a cloth bag. Later, the neck of the bag is tied with a string and it is left in the water to boil.

As a result, these spices release the aroma of the contents of the bag.

In *biryani*, the meat is prepared with the spices and then separately, the rice is boiled. The hot water in which the rice is boiled in is drained out, then in a large '*deg*', the boiled rice is spread out.

Later, the mutton that has been prepared with *qorma* spices is laid in layers.

Once the layers are full, the lid of the *deg* is covered and sealed with *aata*. Other preparations of meat, include the finely minced that is mixed with aromatic spices and made into balls, known as *kofta*.

The *shaami kabaab* is another delicacy and though it is available in other regions too, Awadh chefs specialize in cooking the different varieties of *kababs*. The *rakaabdaar* were mainly hired by *nawabs*, feudal and the rich class in the past. They were just answerable to their masters and came up with new dishes at the instance of their masters. The households often hired male and female *chashak*.

The *chashak* would taste the food before it was served, in order to ensure quality, taste, standard of cooking and also to ward off any conspiracy or plot to poison. Besides, the *chashak* had pets like cats, dogs, parrots and pigeons. The pets too were served parts of the food in case of doubt and the affect of consumption of the particular food on them, was seen and examined.

There was a difference between the culinary culture in Awadh and the food tradition in Delhi, which was the seat of Empire. In *Mughlai* Awadhi dishes, the aroma of clove could be felt. These changes are known to gourmets, as one region may have use of *kewda* for fragrance or other region may have black pepper.

It is important to mention that in order to thicken the gravy of *qorma*, *khaskhash* was used here, whereas at other places, spices were grounded and paste was made before it was added to gravy in order to thicken it. This is the first part of a series of articles under the *Heritage Lane* series. These articles would focus on heritage and history. The next part will appear soon.

Is Myanmar turning into a failed state?

*Myanmar is spread over an area of 676,579 sq km and has a population of nearly 55 million. Since 2021, the country has been going through a period of instability. GDP has shrunk and over 18 million are in need of humanitarian aid.

*The conflict has resulted in a situation that thousands have lost their lives and tens of millions are in dire need of aid. It has been ranked at the bottom--153rd among 163 countries on the index that tracks peace in countries, the most peaceful at the top.



The Unending Conflict in Myanmar that has brought nothing except misery for millions of residents.

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International community hasn't taken active interest, though the situation has gone from bad to worse in the last few years.

The ongoing conflict in Myanmar has thrown the country into an abyss of chaos and instability. Now it is known for poverty and poor governance. In fact, Myanmar is now seen as one of the most politically unstable countries in Asia.

On one hand, junta has leaders like the veteran general, Min Aung Hlaing, who heads the government and has power in his hands, mainly due to repressive tactics. Tens of thousands were arrested and opponents like Aung San Suu Kyi were detained.

Despite public anger, the SAC regime remains in the saddle, firmly. Masses have been visibly upset and there is unrest. However, the strong arm action, has kept the junta afloat. Nearly one third of the country's population needs humanitarian aid.

More than 3.5 million people have been internally displaced. Also, due to failing economy and crumbling institutions, illegal narco trafficking has become a major issue. The flow of refugees is a major cause of concern, along with unemployment. Will it change?

The world needs free media.

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