

7 MYANMAR REFUGEES CAN APPROACH UNHCR

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The High Court of Manipur on Monday allowed seven Myanmar nationals, who entered India secretly following the February military coup, to travel to New Delhi to seek protection from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Though India is not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions, the court observed that the country is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. "The far-reaching and myriad protection afforded by Article 21 of our Constitution, as interpreted and adumbrated by our Supreme Court time and again, would indubitably encompass the right of non-refoulement," the court said.

Non-refoulement is the principle under international law that a person fleeing from persecution from his own country should not be forced to return.

"We welcome the judgment upholding the human rights of the seven Myanmar nationals, three of whom are minors," Babloo Loitongbam, convener of the Citizens' Committee Manipur (CCM), said.

The other four are Niang Go Man, Pau Khan Thawn, Cing San Lun and Si Thu Aung.

The last three are journalists who were working with the Mizzima news service banned by the military junta.

Hiding in Moreh

They had been hiding in the border town Moreh until they were brought to Imphal following an order of the High Court on April 20.

"We continue to be deeply concerned about the plight of thousands of other Myanmar nationals taking shelter in the bordering villages of Manipur without any support and protection apart from the hospitality and warmth of the poor villagers," Mr. Loitongbam said.

The humanitarian sub-committee CCM has provided food, clothing, medicines and utensils donated by the people of Manipur in four villages in Kamjong district and three each in Tengnoupal and Churachandpur districts, housing more than 500 refugees from Myanmar, he said.

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