

U.N. head arrives in Yangon

by UPI

YANGON, Myanmar -- U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon Thursday complained to military leaders in cyclone-hit Myanmar that foreign relief workers have been kept out. Ban, who arrived Thursday in the former capital Yangon, met with Prime Minister Gen. Thein Sein and later traveled to the Irrawaddy Delta, the area worst hit by the May 2 Cyclone Nargis, the Kyodo news agency reported, quoting Ban's spokeswoman. A U.N. official told Kyodo Ban voiced frustration to the prime minister over "the inability of the aid workers to bring assistance at the right time to the affected areas." Thein Sein reportedly said he believed the relief phase was over and it was now time for reconstruction. Ban also planned to meet with junta chief Gen. Than Shwe in the country's new capital Naypyitaw. The junta has drawn strong international criticism over the slow pace of the relief effort for an estimated 2.5 million people and its refusal to let in foreign aid workers. Myanmar's state-run television has put the death toll from Cyclone Nargis at 77,738 while another 55,917 people remained missing. Before coming to Myanmar, Ban said in Bangkok Myanmar's government itself has estimated the losses at more than \$10 billion, the U.N. News Center reported. The BBC reported the junta has allowed some U.N. helicopters to join the aid effort. However, the report said British, French and U.S. ships, waiting off the Irrawaddy Delta, have not been given access to the disaster areas.

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