

Tatmadaw clears base camps of MNDAA in Shan State



Tatmadaw troops after recovering Point 1088 in Shan State. PHOTO: MNA

THE TATMADAW have occupied an area in Laukkai, Shan State known as Point 1088, a strategic area on a hill near the China border that was once controlled by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA).

The area is critical because it is on higher ground, making for better surveillance, and provides easy escape into China for insurgent groups. By controlling the Laukkai-Yanlonkyine route that leads into China, the MNDAA

had been able to engage government troops in skirmishes and then quickly flee. The Tatmadaw column gained control of Point 1088 on 8 March after it battled MNDAA troops with heavy weapons fire starting at 6 am and finally occupying the territory at 10 am.

Point 1088 is only 800 meters away from the China border, which required the Tatmadaw to be careful that their bullets and bombs did not land in China. The battle resulted in six casualties.

Sixteen different weapons and assorted accessories were recovered. Several Tatmadaw officers and soldiers were injured. Government troops scored another success on 15 March, when the Tatmadaw occupied Point 1269, which mainly controls the Laukkai-Yanlonkyine route, further strengthening the Tatmadaw's hold along the border route. The Tatmadaw will continue to clear MNDAA's base camps in the hills, authorities said.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Armed group blocks Union Highway

A GROUP of armed men on Thursday evening halted and forcibly took the car keys and mobile phones of 6 vehicles in Kutkai Township's Union Highway

between Hankine and Komone village, causing a traffic jam, and then took 10 cars and extorted money from the drivers. Border Security forces were dispatched

at 7 in the evening. By the morning of 17 March, traffic on the Union Highway had returned to normalcy.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Thai court dismisses labour abuse suit against chicken farm

BANGKOK — A Thai court on Friday dismissed a compensation claim by 14 migrant workers from Myanmar who had alleged labour violations at a chicken farm that supplied to the European Union.

In their lawsuit against Thammakaset farm and its buyer, agricultural giant Betagro, the workers had alleged forced overtime, unlawful salary deductions, passport confiscation and limited freedom of movement. They demanded around \$1.3 million in compensation and civil damages.

The Saraburi province labour court dismissed the case and upheld an August 2016 order by the labour protection department for the farm to pay the workers nearly \$49,000 for unpaid wages for overtime work.

"The court stood by the investigators' findings, but they didn't look into our claims about passport

confiscation or sleeping next to the chicken coops," said Suthasinee Kaewleklai, a coordinator with the Migrant Worker Rights Network (MWRN), a local non-profit supporting the workers' case.

"We're satisfied to an extent, but we need to ask the workers if they have the energy to continue fighting this case," she said.

In interviews with the Thomson Reuters Foundation last year, the workers said they clocked 20 hours a day for 40 days straight during intensive chick-rearing periods, sleeping in hammocks next to the gigantic warehouses where the flock lived.

They earned \$7 a day, though the legal daily minimum wage for eight-hour days is \$8.60, with one day off per week. Thammakaset owner Chanchai Pheamphon denied the charges and said the staff voluntarily worked nights to rack

up bonuses and chose to sleep next to the chicken warehouse.

Chanchai said on Friday he would appeal the court's ruling. "I want them to cancel the compensation order," he said. "I am appealing because I don't agree with the order to pay the workers 1.7 million baht (\$49,000)."

Chanchai, who has said he is facing bankruptcy after Betagro halted business with him, has separately pursued criminal defamation cases against the 14 migrant workers and British rights activist Andy Hall, who has championed the workers. Thailand has been at the centre of scores of reports of slavery and human trafficking, with migrants from Myanmar suffering the worst exploitation.

In the face of mounting scrutiny of supply chains, Thailand has strengthened laws to crack down on labour exploitation.—*Reuters*

RAKHINE

Arrangements for families to meet relatives in custody for October Maungtaw events

U AUNG NAING and U Saw Thalay Saw, members of the Maungtaw region investigation commission, went to Buthidaung Prison Thursday afternoon, helping family members meet their relatives who had been arrested in connection with the attacks on border police outposts in October, it is learnt.

The commission members first visited the special court of justice at Buthidaung, Maungtaw district court to inspect the preparation of the court. Then the com-

mission members met with family members of the arrested. Township and district administrators interrogated the family members as to the situations to meet with the arrested, negotiating with authorities from the penitentiary.

It is learnt that Commission members met U Myint Tin, Maungtaw District Judge and U Nyi Nyi Lwin, deputy legal officer, discussed the performances for prompt and rightful action in making judgements.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Commission members meet with U Myint Tun, Maungtaw District Judge and Deputy Legal officer U Nyi Nyi Lwin. PHOTO: MNA

Villager found dead in Maungtaw

IT IS learnt that a villager from Yaynauk Ngarthar Village (middle) was found dead in the grove Dusailar, in Maungtaw township's outskirts.

The victim, Soli Mullar, went into the forest to the east of the village to fetch firewood on Thursday morning. After he failed to return home,, villagers

searched for him, finding him with injuries on his neck, right part of forehead, right part of his head and stomach, and stabbed in the left part of ribs.

Arman Ullar, the brother of the victim, filed a case at the Aungzu police station. The investigation is ongoing, police said.—*Myanmar News Agency*

KS 300 million worth of WY seized

ON MARCH 16 at 7 pm, 159,920 tablets of psychotropic drugs with the words WY labeled on them were apprehended at the docks near Thaechaung village in Sitway Township.

Security forces acted on a tipoff and searched a motorboat docked at Thaechaung, discovering 16 huge sacks of the WY drugs with an estimated value of KS 319,840,000.

The owner of the motorboat, Adusalam, is on the run and the Mhansé police outpost have issued a warrant for the fleeing



man. The investigation continues.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Motorboat catches fire in Kyaukpyu

A MOTORBOAT sailing from Kyaukpyu to a donation ceremony in Kalarbartaung village in Rakhine State caught fire near Thitpote mountain yesterday afternoon. Four women died and two children are still missing.

The motorboat was piloted by U Ba Maung Oo and caught fire from its engine around 1.35 pm. Seven men and eight women, a total of fifteen passengers

were on board. Four of the eight women, Ma Aung May Thin, Ma Aye Than Myint, Ma Khin May Than and Ma Sandar Nway, drowned and two children went missing.

The rest of the nine survivors were rescued by Danyawady Naval Force and are receiving the necessary protection and aid.—*Myanmar News Agency*