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A delegation of diplomats and UN officials led by Union Minister U Kyaw Tin, centre, in blue jacket, visits Nga Khu Ya Camp in Maungtau, which will be used for repatriation. **PHOTO: MNA**

## Witnessing repatriation readiness

### Diplomats, UN officials urged to share true situation details

Diplomats and UN agencies toured Rakhine State yesterday to observe the readiness for repatriation of returnees from Bangladesh. The delegation headed by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation, visit-

ed two repatriation camps and one transit camp in Maungtau, Rakhine State.

The trip's primary aim is disseminating accurate information to international communities on the government's efforts for repa-

triation. At Sittway Airport, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin briefed the delegation on the repatriation process and measures taken by the Union Government and the Rakhine State Government under the bilateral agreement with

Bangladesh.

U Nyi Pu, Chief Minister of Rakhine State, also requested the diplomats and UN officials to cooperate with the government in sharing the true situation in Rakhine with international

communities. He also urged the delegation to assist the Rakhine State government in its repatriation efforts and resettlement for returnees from Bangladesh and development in Rakhine State.

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**KBZ BANK**  
STRENGTH OF MYANMAR

**'BEST BANK IN MYANMAR'**

Awarded by FinanceAsia 2017

# Explanation of SWRR Ministry's policy and work processes

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (SWRR) Dr. Win Myat Aye explained his ministry's policy and work processes that directly benefit the people to Hluttaw affairs committee members in the Hluttaw compound's Zabuthiri meeting hall yesterday.

Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U T Khun Myat said members of the Hluttaw, as elected representatives of the people, have a duty to pass laws as well as to conduct a check-and-balance function.

"All are urged to put their best efforts in conducting works that directly benefit the people", he said.

The Deputy Speaker added that in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) meeting that he attended recently, he was able to explain to an international audience the works done by the government for the Rakhine region by emphasising on the works of the SWRR Ministry. For this, he recognises and thanks the officials and staff of the SWRR Ministry.

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye spoke about being able to conduct more works that benefit the people directly when the



Dr. Win Myat Aye addresses the meeting with members of the Hluttaw Affairs Committee. PHOTO: MNA

government and Hluttaw work together. The ministry was able to provide a cash support system to mothers and children from birth to two years old, as well as a monthly social pension payment to elders above 90 years of age. Arrangements are now underway to expand the ministry from two departments to three departments, with the addition of the Department of Rehabilitation.

"As our ministry is responsible for social matters from conception to the old age, it is important to set up policy that allows living a life in dignity and to develop safely. As the requirements of the people are best known by Hluttaw representatives who are always among the people, it is believed that working together with Hluttaw representatives would benefit the people the most. Works will be continued

and implemented to obtain the strength of the people all over the country to free the country of conflict and become developed", said the Union Minister.

Directors general from the three departments under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement then explained their work processes and future work programmes. Hluttaw representatives who are Hluttaw affairs committee members in

attendance then discussed and suggested requirements of the people from their respective constituencies, availability of land for township offices, children's affairs, women's rights, the status of participating in natural disaster preparation works, drug rehabilitation, handicapped rights and old-age pensions, to which the Union Minister and officials provided answers and explanations.—Myanmar News Agency ■

## Diplomats, UN officials observe Maungtaw repatriation work

### FROM PAGE-1

Following the briefing, they flew to Taung Pyo Letwe camp, where displaced people who will return by road will be accepted.

At the camp, U Ye Htut, Maungtaw District Deputy Commissioner, briefed on readiness for providing accommodation, food and security and health care for the returnees.

Ministries concerned also opened offices at the camp to carry out scrutinisation.

The delegation toured Taung Pyo Letwe camp before they flew to Nga Khu Ya camp by helicopter.

Nga Khu Ya camp will be

used for accepting those who return by waterway.

At the camp, 12 ministries opened their branch offices with more than 80 staff to carry out scrutinisation of returnees.

The delegation observed the steps for the scrutinisation process and the issuing of National Verification cards to the returnees.

In the evening, the delegation visited the Muslim community in Pantawpyin Village and viewed completion of houses by the Yangon Region Government.

In the visit to Pantawpyin Village, diplomats and UN officials asked the villagers about



Diplomats and UN officials visit the Friendship Bridge at the border with Bangladesh. PHOTO: MNA

their security, education, health, economic and social situation.

The delegation includes Dato Paduka Haji Abdu'r Rahmani bin Dato Paduka Besir, Patron of the Diplomatic Corps in

Myanmar; Mr. Bob Robert Rae, Former Ontario Premier of Canada, ambassadors and diplomats from Canada, Brunei, the Czech Republic, the EU, Turkey, Indonesia, Australia, France, Japan,

Nepal, the Philippines, Timor Leste, Russia, US, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Republic of Korea and representatives from UNHCR, World Bank, FAO and WFP.—Myanmar News Agency ■

# Solve the armed conflicts through negotiations

MEMBERS of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) abducted civilians and sabotaged two bridges in Sumprabum Township in Kachin State on 28<sup>th</sup> January, and the destruction has stopped the flow of life-saving commodities to the towns and villages of Putao in Kachin State.

With road transportation halted, commodity prices have skyrocketed, resulting in a shortage of household goods and medicines. The sabotage was a severe blow to the local people.

On the same day, the armed group abducted 21 Lisu ethnic people on Myitkyina-Putao-Sumprabum Road near Kawapan Village.

Despite armed conflicts in Kachin State, the Putao District is usually a place of peace and stability. Ethnic people including Jinhaw, Lisu and Rawan love to live in peace. The local people welcomed with delight the recent inauguration of road infrastructures by the government, as it shortened the travel time between Putao and Myitkyina. Previously, it took several days to make the same trip.

We should understand that armed conflicts cause loss of lives on both sides, and civilians are victims of the conflicts.

Today, the delight is gone. The sabotage was a massive blow to the hopes of innocent civilians in Putao District. They took to the street demanding for the recovery of the road transportation and for releasing abducted civilians. Meanwhile, the Kachin State Government has pledged to return the situation into normalcy, with an assurance of safe travel.

We would like to urge the KIA to release the abducted civilians, because all displaced people are civilians.

In fact, in the history of the region, the people in the hilly areas in Kachin State joined in the fight against the colonialists and to regain our independence. After independence, they undertook armed struggle against the then government due to divergent opinions. If we look back at our country's history, soon after the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Panglong Agreement and our Independence, we succumbed to the fires of internal conflict. For nearly seventy years, peace, stability and development in Myanmar have fallen victim to conflict.

We should understand that armed conflicts cause loss of lives on both sides, and civilians are victims of the conflicts. The regions where armed conflicts happen cannot enjoy development. The best way to solve the armed conflicts is negotiations at the table. The Union Government has opened its peace door to all armed groups.

Hence, only cessation of armed conflicts and peace can bring safe and security to the livelihood of the people. Peace and stability will enable our nation to realise its potential as a strong, prosperous Democratic Federal Republic, a Union that will be the refuge and the pride of all our peoples. ■

# Some hidden truths behind the scene

By An Editor

ACCORDING to the bilateral agreement made by Myanmar and the Bangladesh governments, the Myanmar government declared that the repatriation and resettlement programmes will be resumed. But, after signing an agreement with the UNHCR on January 22, Bangladesh postponed the repatriation plan.

It is evident that the Myanmar government is ready for repatriation to accept the displaced people who fled to other places following the terrorist attacks in Rakhine State.

The Myanmar government has taken measures to ensure safe and sustainable returns of the displaced people who will return by sea or by road.

But the Bangladesh government held up the repatriation process and said that the repatriation had been postponed on the grounds that the list of people to be sent back is yet to be prepared, their verification and setting up of transit camps is remaining.

The international community tries to mount pressure on Myanmar to agree what they are demanding regarding the displaced people from Rakhine State.

A few weeks ago, The New York Times journalist Hannah Beech wrote some articles highlighting made-up stories at the refugee camp in Bangladesh and "Blurring fact and fiction in at refugee camps risks undermining their case" which can reveal the truth behind the lies of the some media.

According to her articles, "She was reporting on children who had arrived in the camps without their families. An international charity, which had given financial support to their uncle, brought me to meet the girls. Within an hour, she had a notebook filled with the kind of quotes that pull at heartstrings. Little of it was true.

After three days of reporting, the truth began to emerge. Soyud Hossain, the supposed uncle who had taken the girls in, was actually their father. He had three wives, two in Bangladesh and one in Myanmar, he admitted. The children were from his youngest wife, the one in Myanmar.

In any refugee camp, tragedy is commoditised. Aid groups want to help the neediest cases, and people quickly realise that the story of four orphaned sisters holds more value than that of an intact family that merely lost all its possessions.

And such embellished tales only buttress the Myanmar gov-

"For four days, I interviewed a nine-year-old boy named Noorshad, and his story had it all. In my notebook, he drew pictures of his house - and the tree from which his parents were hanged by Myanmar soldiers. Then he drew the jerry-can he clung to as he crossed the river into Bangladesh. He tied his flip-flops to his waist, he said, with a bit of vine. The sandals were from his dead mother. He glanced at them and sobbed,"

### Inconsistent accounts

But there were inconsistencies. Noorshad said he liked cricket, a sport popular in Bang-

ladesh after their village had been burned, Sajida, the wife with whom he has been living in the Leda refugee camp was furious. "My husband is a bad man," she announced, after she finally admitted the girls' true provenance. "I am tired of all his lies." Later, when I reached Hossain by phone, he was seething.

Child marriage is distressingly common among the Muslim people, and soon, Hossain began shuttling among his three wives. Not every wife knew about the other, but Hossain didn't think three wives were too many. His own father, he said, had six wives and 42 children.

Yet Hossain admitted that he was not adept at balancing family relations. When his four daughters sought shelter in

people believe the foreign media reports on the Rakhine issue are biased.

Due to selective international media, the attacks by terrorists faded out in favour of the view that the Myanmar army and Buddhists are bullies. Activists and societies connected with the Muslims in Rakhine lobbied international communities many years ago. When conflicts happened in Rakhine State, international communities put pressure on Myanmar, which is in the transition to democracy.

But the terrorist attacks and the fleeing of people from conflict areas are just the tip of the iceberg.

The huge and unseen part of the Rakhine issue is under the water. We need energetic efforts with strong desire to explore the groups that are masterminding the Rakhine issue.

Hannah Beech, in her article, pointed out the majority of the media for their failure to seek the truth and ensure accuracy in their reports.

No one can deny the fact that she had seen the displaced people quoted in foreign news media telling stories that she knew lacked consistency and were totally groundless.

The credibility of the media is lost when they fail to seek the truth and ensure accuracy in their reporting.

### The truth emerges too much later

The article by Hannah Beech appeared too late. She produced the article due to her curiosity and doubts about the international media. It also shows that an issue can be approached from different views.

Our country, which upholds the motto "We will prove with our work", are continuing to work without caring praise and despite being denounced and pressured. We will face down everything with the unity of our people. ■

Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung

such embellished tales only buttress the Myanmar government's contention that what is happening in Rakhine State is not ethnic cleansing, as the international community suggests, but trickery by foreign invaders.

ernment's contention that what is happening in Rakhine state is not ethnic cleansing, as the international community suggests, but trickery by foreign invaders.

She said in her article that she had seen the Muslim people quoted in the foreign news media telling stories that I know are not true. Their accounts, in some cases, are too compelling, like a perfect storm of suffering. That is not to discount the collective trauma that has compelled nearly 700,000 residents in Myanmar to flee for Bangladesh over the past five months. Some estimates that 6,700 Muslim people met violent deaths in a single month last year. Even that number, the medical aid group says, is too low,"

lades but not in Myanmar. His grandparents were killed by the military, he told me, but then he admitted they had died of natural causes. I found locals from the village I believed he was from. It turned out that no one had been killed there, much less hanged from a tree.

So where did Noorshad come from? He had been found crying in the market in the Kutupalong refugee camp. Other refugees took him to a school where a pair of women offered hugs and bowls of curry.

Obviously, something bad had happened to him, but to this day, no one has figured out his real story.

I have a better sense of the life of Hossain, the four girls' father.

# Holding NCA signing in Nay Pyi Taw

By Arakan Sein

THIS news report would bring delight not only to the people of Mon and Lahu but also to the entire people of Myanmar. The signing ceremony will be the first of its kind for the incumbent government and non-signatories are also invited to come forward and participate in the peace process. The New Mon State Party and the Lahu Democratic Union will sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in the ceremony highly valued and decorated under the government sponsorship. Eight ethnic armed groups signed the NCA in October, 2015; the New Mon State Party and Lahu Democratic Union from five member groups of United Nationalities Federal Council will sign the NCA in Nay Pyi Taw on 13 January, 2018. In addition, the government has made an offer to the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) for discussions to sign the NCA. KNPP is one of the five member groups of the United Nationalities Council in which Arakan National Council (ANC) and Wa National Organisation are also included.

Achieving peace and stability What we really need now is to achieve peace and stability in the country. The Panglong Agreement was signed at Panglong, Shan State on 12 February, 1947. During the Conference in February, 1947 on the agenda was the united struggle for independence from Britain and the future of our

country after independence as a unified republic.

Unfortunately, many ethnic nationals disagreed with the Central Government and went underground. Frankly speaking, the Central Government and the ethnic armed groups in Myanmar have been virtually at war since independence from the British in 1948. That is why one of the four objectives of 71st Anniversary Union Day is to build a Federal Democratic Union through the Union Peace Conference—21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong.

United we stand, divided we fall This phrase is often used to inspire unity and collaboration. After all, national unity is the first and foremost necessity of a peaceful and prosperous country. There are a lot of examples in the history of the world when due to lack of national unity, there have been internal and external dangers to the security and survival of countries. Two examples from Aesop's fables are well known and we should put them into practice in our daily life.

The Four Oxen and the Lion A lion used to prowl about a field in which four oxen used to dwell.

Many a time he tried to attack them; but whenever he came near they turned their tails to warn one another so that whichever way he approached them, he was met by the horns of one of them.

At last however, they fell quarrelling among themselves, and each went off to pasture

alone in a separate corner of the field. Then the lion attacked them one by one and made an end of all four.

In the other story, the farmer asked his quarrelsome sons to break a bundle of sticks. The sons can not break the bundle, but can easily break the sticks when they are separated. The farmer thus proves that unity is strength.

Therefore, the entire people of Myanmar should be reminded to grasp the opportunities created by the government for building a Federal Union through the Union Peace Conference-21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong. In doing so, the people should absorb painful lessons of the British rule and the Japanese occupation; the former fought with our country in 1824, 1852 and 1885, culminating in the loss of Myanmar sovereignty and independence and the latter invaded Myanmar in 1942 putting our country to be terribly down and out during the Second World War.

In conclusion, all ethnic armed groups should be officially invited to come up with their own proposals and ideas for discussions in order to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. Myanmar will have to redouble its efforts in keeping up with all the changes and challenges in the world for our country remained among the poorest in the ASEAN countries and ranked 114th among 155 countries surveyed, according to the World Happiness 2017. ■

