

Media interviews Hindus in Rakhine State

By Kyaw Thu Win,
Aye Min Thu

THE local and foreign media interviewed Hindu women who returned to Myanmar from Bangladesh, after they were abducted by ARSA extremist terrorists, at the General Administration Department in Maungtaw on 17 March.

Ma Fomila, Khamaungseik village: It was between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. when terrorists entered our house that day. They tied our hands behind our backs, blindfolded us and ordered us to sit in a row. They beat us with sticks and then murdered all the men. They demanded gold and cash from us, and when they got what they wanted, they took us into the jungle. They ordered eight of us (all women) to sit in a hut. They insulted our religion. They asked us whether we would convert to their religion and marry them. As we were afraid to die, we had to give in to their demands.

The terrorists ordered us to discard our clothes and wear those worn by women of their faith. They then took us to Bangladesh. We reached the other bank at about 11 a.m. the next day. We faced torture and insults from the women of their faith in the other country. To stop them from harassing us, we told



Hindu women, left, answering to questions from local and foreign media about their escape from ARSA terrorists who abducted them to Bangladesh. **PHOTO: MNA**

them we would convert to their faith and live in love and peace together. The terrorists warned us to tell the media as they had instructed us to do. Or else, they would tell the media that our villagers and the people of our race were killed by the Rakhine people and the military.

One night, they took us to a man named Babu. At that time, more than 1,000 people from their faith were demanding that

we be murdered. Babu told the crowd that he would inform the police if we were murdered. We stayed there for some 35 days. We were asked if we wanted to stay back in Bangladesh. We told them we wanted to live on the land where we were brought up under our religion and customs. The government organisations and the ethnic people in Rakhine State never harmed us. We were troubled by the terrorists. So,

we told them we wished to go back to Myanmar. With the help of some Hindu religious leaders, we returned to Myanmar on 27 September. Arrangements have been made to provide us with food, clothing and shelter. I have a child. I want a happy life with my relatives at home.

U Ni Maung, Hindu religious leader, Maungtaw region, said: I found through a Facebook page that some 10 Hindu women were

abducted by terrorists and taken to Bangladesh. I immediately informed the relevant authorities about the matter. The authorities permitted us to get them back. So, I contacted Hindu religious leaders in Bangladesh and got them back. The government also rendered assistance.

The Maungtaw region had a Hindu population between 1,200 and 1,300. More than 400 Hindus from the region are still in Bangladesh. I want to get them back. Ten women and 16 children have returned from Bangladesh. Local and foreign mediapersons have interviewed them. The Hindus have told the truth, but we were threatened on the phone. Thanks to the government and welfare organisations, Buddhist monks and donors, Hindus who returned from Bangladesh are leading a secure life in Sittway. Initially, there were only three or four donations when they returned to Buthidaung. They were kept in camps, as it was dangerous for them to live in the wards. The religious groups are protecting them.

Some 102 Hindus were butchered by terrorists. We want the government to protect us to prevent the re-occurrence of such tragic events. We thank the local and foreign media, as we can tell them the truth. ■

Local and foreign reporters visit reception centers in Rakhine State

A group of reporters from local and foreign media visited reception centres, Myanmar-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge and the border fence in Taung Pyo Letwe Town, Rakhine State yesterday morning.

Firstly, at the reception centre Maungtaw District Deputy Administrator U Ye Htoo explained about preparations in the centre, humanitarian aids and procedures of the camp construction, followed by a question and answer session.

Afterwards, the media group gathered news on temporary shelters for returnees in the centre, opening of the repatriation office and Myanmar-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge.

Then, they also met with people living at Myanmar-Bangladesh border area and inter-



Local and foreign reporters interacting with people at the border in Rakhine State. **PHOTO: MNA**

viewed them. In the afternoon, the media group arrived in Indin Village and met with local

ethnics who were the victims of terrorist attacks.

Later, in the evening, the

media group arrived back Yangon from Sittway.—Thura Zaw (MNA) ■

Moderate earthquake rocks in Pyu Township

NO casualties were reported following a moderate earthquake with the magnitude of 5.3 on the Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar about 26 miles southwest of Pyu, latitude 18.27 °N, longitude 96.10 °E, depth 57 kilometers about 98 miles north of Kaba-Aye seismological observatory was recorded at 2:29 am yesterday, according to a source from the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.

Myanmar has had 54 earthquakes during the period from 1 January to 18 March.—Myanmar Digital News ■

UEHRD discussion held in Sittway

VICE Chairman for Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) and Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye; Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe; and UEHRD Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet led a team to Sittway, Rakhine State, on 17 March to hold a meeting with the Rakhine State government on the UEHRD.

The meeting concerned the repatriation and relocation efforts in Maungtau District.

The meeting started yesterday at the Rakhine State Hluttaw building. Rakhine State Hluttaw Speaker U San Kyaw Hla delivered the opening speech, followed by Dr. Win Myat Aye's explanation on the development works and the establishment of the rule of law in the state. He said the incumbent government has been working on ethnic development, man-made disasters, development of infrastructure, power supply, creation of job opportunities, as well as the de-



Dr. Win Myat Aye discussing the progress of UEHRD with Rakhine State Government officials. PHOTO: MNA

velopment of Industrial zones.

Dr. Win Myat Aye said the UEHRD has been working on repatriation, resettlement, humanitarian aid and end of conflicts in Rakhine State.

Later, Union Minister U Thein Swe addressed the audience and said they were listening

to the voice of the Rakhine people, while adhering to the 1982 Citizenship Law and the 1993 Repatriation Agreement with Bangladesh.

He also said they were taking strict measures to ensure that terrorists or other such people do not pass the repatriation

checkpoints in Taung Pyo Letwe and Ngakuya centres.

Lastly, Dr Aung Tun Thet said they were trying to address the accusations made by the international community, while working with the local residents of Rakhine State for its development.

This was followed by the attendants asking questions about the repatriation process, to which Dr. Win Myat Aye replied.

Later, the union ministers and their entourage left for Indin Village in Maungtau District to check the progress made in the security and repatriation efforts. The village will station four teams as border security guards.

The entourage then travelled along the Myinlut-Jintaw-Tapyaytar-U Daung-Maungtau road to view the villages that were burnt down. They then arrived in Myothugyi Village and inspected the security and regional peace efforts being made there.

Next, the entourage travelled to Kyeinchaung Village to inspect the temporary shelters for the returnees.

Also accompanying the union ministers were Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, Rakhine State ministers, Department of Rehabilitation Director-General U Win Naing Tun, Myanmar Police Force Brig-Gen Myo Swe Win, and other officials. —Myanmar News Agency

EU to assist in environmental conservation exchange programme

May Thet Hnin

WITH the assistance of the European Union (EU), Myanmar will conduct a student and teacher exchange programme on environmental conservation, which will involve three foreign universities and four local universities.

Dr Sai Sein Lin Oo, a lecturer from Mandalay University and national project coordinator, said, "Students pursuing a master's in botany, marine zoology and forestry at Myeik University, Mawlamyine University, Mandalay University and University of Forestry in Myanmar, and Germany-based University of Gottingen, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna of Australia, as well as University of Extremadura in Spain, are eligible for the programme."

The EuMuCAP project will be officially launched in October this year and will run until 2020.

Dr Sai Sein Lin Oo said, "The exchange programme will provide opportunities for Myanmar students to study abroad and help promote the teaching skills of the faculty members of local universities.

The project is expected to be beneficial to both students and teachers. In our country, a lot of field research in the related subjects is being conducted. However, the country is in a position to publish only a handful of research articles internationally. We hope the programme will produce more professional researchers, who can present their findings internationally."

U Thein Aung, chairman of Myanmar Birds and Nature Society, said students will be given lessons on wildlife and related plants, including theoretical knowledge, as well as practical works under this programme. "In addition to these, the course will provide knowledge about the habitats

of wildlife, including birds, endangered species of animals, administration of national gardens and sanctuaries, illegal trading of wildlife, international organisations working for environmental conservation, as well as domestic and international laws related to the environment," he added.

U Thein Aung said, "As a biodiverse country, Myanmar needs to produce professional researchers who can apply their knowledge and experience to the field of biodiversity conservation. Students will enjoy the opportunity to take field trips to forest reserves and wildlife sanctuaries located near the respective universities." The European Union has pledged to offer financial assistance and the necessary teaching aids under the three-year project. The detailed curriculum and the procedures for the project will be discussed at the meeting, which will take place in June or July in Mandalay.



Commander Kyaw Soe Lwin of Myanmar Tatmadaw hands over the speed boat to the Colonel of Thailand Jirawit Chulakran and party at the Kawthoung Jetty. PHOTO: KYAW SOE (KAWTHOUNG)

Lost Thai speed boat transferred

MYANMAR Tatmadaw (Navy) transferred to the authorities of Thailand the lost speed boat of Phayam Co. Ltd. that was found floating in the Myanmar water Andaman Sea on 17 March.

Phayam Co.Ltd. lost its Speed Boat on 11 March, 2018 and the authorities of Thailand informed Myanmar

Tatmadaw(Navy).

The Speed Boat was found on 13 March, 2018 near the Shar Island in Andaman Sea.

Commander Kyaw Soe Lwin of Myanmar Tatmadaw transferred the Speed Boat to the Colonel of Thailand Jirawit Chulakran and party at the Kawthoung Jetty. —Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)