

State Counsellor receives Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar received Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on 27th February 2019 at 10 a.m. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they cordially exchanged views on matters related to

recent developments in Rakhine State and on Myanmar's peace and national reconciliation process and China's continued constructive support in Myanmar's endeavours.

During the visit, Mr. Sun Guoxiang paid a visit to Hla Phoe Khaung Transit Centre, Shwe Zar and Min Gan villages in Rakhine State to observe the Myanmar Government's preparations for the repatriation process. —MNA



Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs, Mr. Sun Guoxiang, visits Hla Phoe Khaung Transit Centre in Rakhine State. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs, Mr. Sun Guoxiang, in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

PRC donates 20 Sinotruck Howo cars to Rakhine State for repatriation, resettlement processes

A CEREMONY to donate 20 Sinotruck Howo cars by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to Rakhine State for Repatriation and Resettlement of displaced people was held yesterday at National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC).

During the event, Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang said the People's Republic of China is supporting Myanmar's efforts for peace and stability in Rakhine State. He made a wish for peace, stability and social economic development in Rakhine State with the efforts led by Myanmar government.

Afterwards, Union Minister and Chairman of the Committee on Repatriation and Resettlement of Displaced People Dr. Win Myat Aye said Myanmar is ready for repatriation in accord with the Myanmar-Bangladesh bilateral agreement. Though Ministry of Defence has arranged vehicles for transportation of the displaced people in



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang and officials pose for a photo at National Reconciliation and Peace Centre. **PHOTO: MNA**

two reception centres and one transit centre, more vehicles were needed, and expressed thanks to PRC for the 20-vehicle donation.

The Union Minister then expressed his thanks to PRC

for continued cooperation on the repatriation processes.

The Union Minister then accepted the documents related to vehicles handed over by Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Hong Liang, and presented

in return certificate of honor to the Chinese Ambassador.

The Union Minister then re-handed over the vehicle-related documents to the Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu.

The Union Minister, Chi-

nese Ambassador and party then observed the donated vehicles, and have a commemorative photo taken.

In the morning, the Union Minister met with People's Republic of China's Special Envoy for Asian Affairs Mr. Sun Guoxiang at his ministry.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to preparation at two reception camps and one transit camp for repatriation of displaced people, resettlement after repatriation, housing construction, vocational schools and rehabilitation works, and Myanmar side's preparedness for education, health and social services accesses.

They also discussed the Special Envoy's coming visit to Bangladesh and United Nations Headquarters to discuss the current development of Rakhine State.— MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivers Statement on Government's efforts in promoting and protecting human rights at the UN Human Rights Council

(Geneva, 26 February 2019)

UNION Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin attended the High Level Segment of the 40th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council held in Geneva from 25 to 27 February and delivered a Statement on 26 February 2019.

In his Statement, the Union Minister apprised the meeting of the importance of guiding principles to which the Human Rights Council should adhere to, progress and challenges in the efforts of Myanmar Government for peace and national reconciliation, development, promotion and protection of human rights, resolving the issues in Rakhine State and cooperation with the United Nations in promoting human rights.

At the meeting, he stressed that promotion and protection of human rights can be achieved through dialogue, constructive engagement and cooperation instead of confrontation and condemnation. Every independent mandate holder or mechanism created by the Council should strictly adhere to the principles of independence, impartiality and integrity. Everyone must also be held accountable for what they say or report.

The Union Minister underlined the need to recognize the primary responsibility of a sovereign state in realisation of human rights for its own people and to take into consideration of each nation's particular circumstances such as its own historical and cultural background, capacity constraints as well as other challenges and complexities facing the individual country.

The Union Minister apprised the meeting that the people of Myanmar have started to enjoy the greater freedom and democratic rights and there are visible improvements in health, education, and socio-economic sectors since the emergence of a democratically elected civilian government. They will be reinforced by the on-going implementation of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan-MSDP. He also added that with a view to protecting the democratic rights of the people, a joint parliamentary committee has been formed by the ruling party to amend the undemocratic provisions of the Constitution.

With regard to peace and national reconciliation, the Union Minister further informed the Meeting of the successful holding of 3 sessions of the Union Peace Conference/21st Century Panglong Conference resulting in agreement on 51 basic principles to build a Democratic Federal Union. He also mentioned that ten EAOs have already signed the NCA and the Government is redoubling its efforts to bring all on board. The Union Minister also informed about the announcement of a four month cessation of its region wise military operations in Kachin and Shan States by the Tatmataw since 21 December 2018, and the recent outbreak of fightings in northern Rakhine State ignited by the attacks of AA insurgents that has even further complicated the situation and highlighted the urgent need to make the peace process a success. "Ending of armed conflicts will not only pave the way for development, but also bring an end to conflict-related violation of human rights", he said.

On the issue of Rakhine State, the Union Minister said that Myanmar is still facing numerous challenges in its delicate democratic transition which needs the continued support of the international community. Sadly, the world's attention is narrowly focused only on the negative aspects related to the issue in northern Rakhine State which was wrongfully portrayed as an issue of religious persecution by the massive media campaign launching against Myanmar.

He explained that it is neither an issue of religious persecution nor inter-religious conflict. But it is, in fact, a political and economic issue involving prolonged



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin.

cross-border illegal migration since colonial time, poverty and lack of rule of law and national security. Regardless of events of northern Rakhine State, Myanmar is a multi-religious country where different faiths including majority of Muslim population live in harmony throughout the country.

While sharing Myanmar's concern over the plight of all affected communities in Rakhine State due to the violence ignited by provocative coordinated attacks of ARSA against multiple security outposts in October 2016 and August 2017, the Union Minister pointed out that the seeds of fear sown by the ARSA led to massive displacement of people. He reminded that all unlawful violence committed by any side must be condemned.

He added that the Government is fully committed to find a sustainable solution that would lead to peace, stability and development for all people in Rakhine State. The Government is implementing a vast majority of the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Advisory Commission and working on an action plan to implement five priority areas covering issues of citizenship, freedom of movement, closure of IDP camps, education and health.

"The most pressing task today is to focus on nothing but commencing the repatriation process soonest to resolve the humanitarian situation" in Rakhine State, he said by reiterating Myanmar's readiness to receive the verified returnees in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner in accordance with the bilateral arrangements reached with Bangladesh in November 2017.

In order to create conducive environment for the returnees, the Union Minister explained that the Government is working not only with UNDP and UNHCR, but also with its ASEAN friends and regional partners, and also mobilizing funds from public, private and the people through UEHRD. Recently, the Rakhine State Investment Fair was held to generate job opportunities, income and long term development. He stressed, "Development is the best recipe for ending the communal conflicts."

On the other hand, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin reiterated Myanmar's firm position that the Government has categorically objected to the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) since its establishment, as well as its narrative-based report for a number of reasons including its mandate's exclusion of investigations on violations committed by ARSA, its full adherence to the stories of Muslim displaced persons while rejecting any contradicting evidence, ignorance of the reports revealing the massacres by the ARSA and its political motivation, and the conclusions of the report are politically motivated and not supported by credible evidences.

He also shared the information on the progress of the works of the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) and its Evidence Collection and Verification Team (ECVT).

He reaffirmed that the Government is willing and able to address the accountability issue. Hence, he reiterated Myanmar's strong rejection to any move to bring the issue of Rakhine State to international judicial system.

With regard to protecting and promoting human rights in Myanmar, he apprised the meeting of the significant steps taken by the Government, especially for its children, women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Myanmar has already ratified 4 international core human rights treaties, namely CRC, CEDAW, CRPD, and ICESCR and signed the OPAC—Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. This year, the Government has set a target to ratify the OPAC and to sign the ICCPR—International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Being a strong supporter for the UPR mechanism, Myanmar will be submitting the 3rd national report under the UPR process in 2020. The Government is taking steps to enact legislations including the new Child Rights Law, and draft laws to address the issues of hate speech as well as violence against women.

There have been a number of visits to Myanmar paid by the Special Envoy of the Secretary General, the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflicts.

The Union Minister further informed the Meeting that the Government has established a National Committee in January to prevent the issue of 6 grave violations relating to the children and armed conflict. It will also set up a national committee and draw up a national action plan to implement the Joint Communiqué that Myanmar had signed with the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict last December. Also in the bilateral context, Myanmar is holding human rights dialogues with the European Union, Japan and the United States.

He pointed out that Myanmar has been unfairly targeted and disproportionately put under special scrutiny by multiple mechanisms of the UN despite those positive developments in the country.

He further explained the reasons for Myanmar's rejection to the UN resolutions for setting up the planned establishment of Independent Investigative Mechanism (IIM): it was established beyond the Human Rights Council's mandate and its Terms of References (TOR) is also very intrusive on the sovereignty of Myanmar; it would only serve political ambition of those who wish to exploit the Council for their political agenda; the funding arrangement which allow additional non-budgetary resources will severely affect independence and impartiality; and a more than 26 million US Dollar budget allocation and recruitment of 62 staff headed by an ASG to monitor a country through this mechanism would be wasting the scarce resources of the United Nations.

In conclusion, the Union Minister stressed that the Government is making every effort to further advance peace, democracy and development. Despite numerous challenges and constraints, Myanmar will do its best to take its primary responsibility to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of all people without losing sight of the country's future. The Government is only seeking for fairness in the approach of the international community in addressing the challenges. He also urged the Council to make careful examination of the complete and objective information before taking any important judgment or policy decision on issues at hand.

He conveyed his appreciation for the support of many friends and partners to Myanmar in various ways and welcomed their constructive cooperation in helping Myanmar resolve the complex and delicate issue.

Japan Gov't, five UN agencies sign Grant Aid to Myanmar

AMBASSADOR of Japan Mr. Ichiro Maruyama, and the representatives of five UN agencies signed the Exchange of Notes regarding grant assistance projects for Myanmar on 26 February 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, as part of the following grant assistance package of 4.2 billion Yen (approx. US\$37.4 million) provided to help improve the humanitarian and development situation in Rakhine State, Kachin State and northern part of Shan State.

UN-Habitat had signed its Exchange of Notes with the Government of Japan separately on 19 February.

The project for responding to the humanitarian situation in Rakhine State, Kachin State and northern part of Shan State with total grant of 2.2 billion Yen (approx. US\$19.6 million) intends to provide, through World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), humanitarian assistance such as food distribution (helping a total of 300,000 beneficiaries), child education (reaching a total of 40,000 children) and mobile clinic services (for a total of 534,500



Japanese Ambassador Mr. Ichiro Maruyama, representatives of five UN agencies, and Myanmar officials pose for a photo at the formal signing of Exchange of Notes regarding grant assistance projects for Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

women) to the affected people and communities in Rakhine State, Kachin State and northern part of Shan State.

The Project for Humanitarian and Development Assistance in Rakhine State with total grant of 1.5 billion Yen (Approx. US\$13.4 million) came after the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) and the Myanmar Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding in June 2018 to support the return of displaced persons from Bangladesh.

This project builds on their work so far, and aims to provide, through the UNHCR and the UNDP, humanitarian and development assistance, including the distribution of commodity

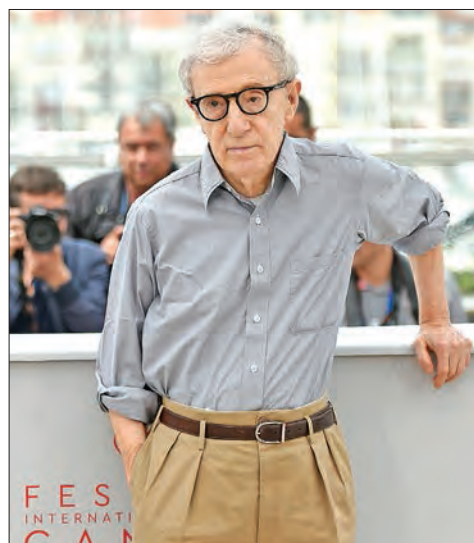
goods to IDPs who live in camps (about 110,000 beneficiaries), provision of vocational training for women in agriculture etc. (about 750 beneficiaries), and the restoration of existing shelters.

The project with total grant: 0.54 billion Yen (Approx. US\$ 4.8 million) of supporting settlements in Rakhine State includes reconstruction of houses and

smallscale Community Infrastructures for Returnees and Displaced People.

This project aims to prepare for and implement a community-driven, owner-led rebuilding of settlements for returning refugees in Northern Rakhine or for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the camps in Central Rakhine.—GNLM

Woody Allen to film in Spain this summer: producer



US director Woody Allen. **PHOTO: AFP**

MADRID (Spain)—US director Woody Allen plans to film in Spain's Basque region this summer, the production company Mediapro and a Spanish source told AFP on Tuesday.

"Mediapro will produce the new Woody Allen film," a company spokesperson said, before adding: "The project is in an initial phase, we cannot therefore provide details." A well-informed source told AFP that Allen, 83, would work in San Sebastian, capital of the Spain's northwest Basque region. The Basque daily El Diario Vasco reported meanwhile that an advance team had been spotted in the city.

The new Spanish project continued the US film director's cinematic love affair

with major European cities.

In 2008, Allen released "Vicky Cristina Barcelona", which was set in the Catalan capital and was also financed by Mediapro.

The company also produced Allen's 2011 film "Midnight in Paris".

Other Allen films have been set in Rome and London.

Earlier this month Allen filed a \$68 million suit against Amazon for breach of contract, accusing the streaming giant of cancelling a film deal because of a "baseless" decades-old allegation that he sexually abused his adopted daughter.

The film in question "A Rainy Day in New York". has been completed but not released.—AFP ■

Hit song 'Despacito' breaks YouTube record with six billion views

PARIS (France)—The mega-hit "Despacito" by the Puerto Rican singer Luis Fonsi has become the most watched video ever on YouTube with more than six billion views, the Google-owned service said on Tuesday. The video, first released in January 2017 by Fonsi and Puerto Rican rapper Daddy Yankee, already holds the record for the fastest two billion, three billion and four billion views (272 days).

Fonsi's Spanish-language hit, whose English title is "Slowly", has had nearly two billion views more than its nearest challenger, "Shape of You", by the British singer Ed Sheeran. The South Korean singer Psy was the first to cross the two-billion-views barrier on the platform with his "Gangnam Style" in 2012, which also set off a dance craze. Psy is now fifth in the YouTube charts with 3.3 billion views.—AFP ■

Shakira to be questioned in June over alleged tax fraud

BARCELONA (Spain)—Colombian superstar Shakira will be questioned by a court near Barcelona on June 12 for allegedly evading 14.5 million euros (\$16.5 million) in taxes, a Spanish court said on Tuesday.

In a statement, the high court of Catalonia, where the singer lives with her partner, FC Barcelona footballer Gerard Pique, said she had been summoned to appear before a judge in Esplugues de Llobregat.

The 42-year-old is suspected of not paying taxes in Spain despite being a res-

ident between 2011 and 2014, according to prosecutors.

The case only covers the period from 2012 to 2014, however, as the timeframe to prosecute alleged tax offences in 2011 has expired.

In a relationship since 2011 Pique, with whom she has two sons, Shakira transferred her official residency to Spain in 2015. Until then, it was in the Bahamas.

But a spokesman for prosecutors in Barcelona told AFP last year that this didn't "match reality" with her children

and partner in Barcelona.

Shakira's representatives insist that until 2014 she earned most of her money in international tours and didn't live more than six months a year in Spain—a prerequisite to be an official tax-paying resident in the country.

With her mix of Latin and Arabic rhythms and rock influences, Shakira is one of the biggest stars from Latin America, scoring major global hits with songs such as "Hips Don't Lie" and "Whenever, Wherever."—AFP ■