

Overcome challenges to afforestation through cooperation

THE Union Government has stepped up efforts to set up state-owned forest plantations across the country to increase the area under forest cover, after an FAO survey showed that just 42.92 per cent of the country's land is under forests.

A 10-year afforestation project has been adopted and implemented from the 2017-2018 fiscal year. The project ends in the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Besides, Myanmar has made a commitment to designate 30 per cent of the country's forests as reserves by 2030, and 10 per cent as natural wildlife sanctuaries.

To achieve that target, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation has established over 42,000 acres of forests, including hardwood and mangrove forests, in the past three years of the current government's tenure. Plans are underway to establish further 22,000 acres of forests in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

The success of the afforestation efforts would help ensure future generations produce forest products without damaging the natural environment.

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The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation is also implementing the European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade - Voluntary Partnership Agreement (EU FLEGT VPA) to curb illegal trade of forest products, encourage sustainable forest management, and legally export timber to the European Union.

The Ministry has carried out reforms in the forest sector, and is working to prevent illegal logging and implement short-term and long-term policies after reviewing current policies and rules and procedures.

The establishment and extension of forest areas inside and outside the forest reserves and natural forest areas are a major task of the Ministry.

But, the biggest challenge to a balanced approach between environmental conservation and regional development has been the squatters in the forest reserve areas.

Just focusing on obtaining legal land use permits in the forest reserve areas, without taking environmental conservation into consideration, will not help strike a balance between afforestation and regional development.

Forests play a key role in environmental conservation and help regulate the weather.

Hills and plains covered with thick forests can help balance the effects of extreme weather. Barren hills cannot help conserve the environment. Areas without forests do not enjoy fine weather and environment.

That is why all the people must abide by the rules set by the local authorities for environmental conservation and seek sustainable solutions for the current challenges to the expansion of forest areas in our country.

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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of International Cooperation: Defending and protecting the interests of the people and the State in the international arena

"Within the three year period of our government, we were able to establish diplomatic relations with seven new partner countries. We have already established diplomatic relations with 121 countries out of 193 countries of the world."

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin

(Continued from the interview with the Union Minister for International Cooperations covered by GNLM on 30 April)

PREVIOUSLY we had Foreign Office Consultations (FoC) mechanisms mostly with our neighbouring countries. At present we have expanded such consultation mechanisms also with countries within and outside the region including Australia, Switzerland, Estonia, New Zealand, Colombia, Belarus, Brazil, Nepal and Turkey. We have been conducting human rights dialogues annually with Japan and the EU to gain mutual understanding and increased cooperation in this area.

Q: To improve international relations, can you tell me about your efforts to expand diplomatic relations with new partner countries if any?

Union Minister: We are exerting efforts to establish diplomatic relations with new partner countries with a view to promoting friendly relations and mutual support with many countries across the world. Within the three year period of our government, we were able to establish diplomatic relations with seven new partner countries. We have already established diplomatic relations with 121 countries out of 193 countries of the world. With a view to promoting friendly relations with African countries, we have already taken steps to establish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Benin, Congo Republic and the Republic of Togo.

With an aim to strengthen our relations with more countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region as well as with the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, we are working on opening of new Embassies in Havana (Cuba), and Prague (the Czech Republic) in 2019.

Q: May I know about your participation and activities in regional organizations?

Union Minister: We are participating actively in a number of regional groupings such as ASEAN, BIMSTEC, Greater Mekong Cooperation Scheme, Ayeyawady-Chao

Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), Mekong-Lancang Cooperation, Mekong-Japan, Mekong-Korea Cooperation, and the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI).

Myanmar is taking charge of the Country Coordinator in agriculture sector under ACMECS; and also acting as Coordinator for agriculture and industry sector in formulating a framework for CLMV development cooperation. Under BIMSTEC framework, we are participating as a Lead Country in the agricultural and energy sectors.

President U Win Myint himself represented Myanmar at the 4th BIMSTEC Summit. As part of BIMSTEC program, Myanmar organized a regional workshop on agriculture. We also successfully hosted a workshop on traditional medicine and an expert group meeting on energy. We are planning to host a BIMSTEC Agriculture Ministers' Meeting and a BIMSTEC National Security Advisors' meeting in the near future.

We have also hosted the LMI/FLM (Lower Mekong Initiative/Friends of the Lower Mekong) regional workshop and related meetings in cooperation with the US State Department. Furthermore, we also hosted successfully the GMS Senior Officials' Meeting and the 10th GMS Economic Corridors Forum.

Being a Co-chair of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund for 2018, Myanmar hosted a meeting for the senior officials in 2018. In addition, we have also hosted the ASEAN Regional Forum for Peace Building in Nay Pyi Taw which was co-chaired by Myanmar, New Zealand and the United States.

Q: How are you planning to respond to the challenges being faced in the international arena?

Since the breaking out of the conflicts between the two communities in Rakhine State in June 2012, the issue of Rakhine State has attracted greater international attention and found its way into the resolutions on Myanmar adopted by the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. The Government has therefore accorded high priority to resolve the issue of the Rakhine State ever



The certificate awarding ceremony for Enhanced Diplomatic Skills training course conducted by MoFA in February, 2019.

since it took office.

We have stated to put in place necessary mechanisms including setting up of the Advisory Commission for Rakhine State headed by Dr. Kofi Anan who is highly respected by the international community for his capability to resolve conflicts in fair and impartial manner. The Commission was assigned with the aim of finding a durable and sustainable solution to the complicated issue in Rakhine State. This has also contributed to the discontinuation of the EU-sponsored resolution on situation of human rights in Myanmar at the UN General Assembly in 2016, which has been tabled for the past 20 years. This is one of our remarkable achievements.

However, as a result of massive displacement of persons from Rakhine State following the co-ordinated attacks by the ARSA and ensuing incidents, the OIC tabled a resolution against Myanmar again at the 2017 session of the UN General Assembly, resulting in resurgence of international pressures on Myanmar. In light of this situation, our Ministry had to step up our efforts to respond to those mounting pressure through occasional issuance of our position statements, defending our position both at home and abroad, and lobbying other delegations to understand more about the realities and facts surrounding the issue.

The State Counsellor personally attended the UN General Assembly in 2016 and delivered a policy statement in the general debate. Likewise, Vice President U Henry Van Thio and U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister of Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor attended the UN General Assembly in 2017 and in 2018 respectively and delivered their policy statement.

Prior to the general debate of the 2017 UNGA, State Counsellor

has also attended regularly the high-level segment of the United Nations Human Rights Council every year during the past three years to present the views and position of the government on the issue. At the UNGA meeting in 2018, Britain attempted to present a draft resolution on Myanmar to have it adopted at the UN Security Council. The Myanmar delegation made intensive diplomatic moves to explain the Myanmar's efforts to address the issue and also ar-

ASEAN indicated their understanding on the complex and sensitive nature of the Rakhine issue and offered their readiness to assist us with the ASEAN family spirit in our efforts to bring peace, stability and development in Rakhine State.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered an address on the state of the Union on 19 September 2017 in Nay Pyi Taw to explain the situation in Rakhine State. Again just before the commencement of the 2018 UN General Assembly, she delivered a timely speech at the Singapore lecture series and at the World Economic Forum held in Hanoi on Myanmar's position on the challenges faced during her transition towards democracy.

The Union Minister for International Cooperation, on his part,

ranged Ministerial-level meeting among key parties including Myanmar, Bangladesh and China. Thanks to these flurry of efforts, we were able to thwart the attempt to get the draft resolution passed.

With regard to the formation of the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) on Myanmar, we have stated our position loud and clear, right from the time of the adoption of the resolution to establish the FFM citing the facts that there was no transparency in the process; its mandate was also biased and

could pose an impediment to the efforts made by the government in resolving the issue; it would not be in conformity with the real situation at the ground level. For these reasons we made our position clear that the mandate given to the FFM was unacceptable to Myanmar. The Government's clear position on the report of the FFM was also also made known when its report came out.

When I attended the high-level segment of the Human Rights Council meeting held on 26 February 2019 in Geneva, I stated again in my speech why we cannot accept the report of the FFM. Whenever the draft resolutions on Myanmar were taken up at the UN General Assembly or Human Rights Council, the Myanmar Permanent Representatives in New York and in Geneva spared no efforts to defend their position constantly by calling for a vote or by delivering their position statements to make our position known.

At the same time we have sought the assistance of those friendly countries who understand the complexities and challenges facing Myanmar, and we are making concerted efforts to deliver improvements on the ground and to start repatriation process to take back those who could be verified as former residents and free from crimes in accord with the bilateral

arrangements reached between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

To address the accountability issue, the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) was set up in July 2018 with two prominent persons from abroad and two professionals from within the country. We also made it abundantly clear that our Government has the will and ability to deal with the accountability issue; and that for this reason we cannot accept any attempt to the involvement of the international judicial system in this matter. At the same time we have established the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) to work on matters relating to providing humanitarian assistance, resettlement and development in Rakhine State. In the long run, we will be implementing the Kofi Anan commission recommendations to the fullest extent possible. In order to make sure that there are no undesirable external interferences in our efforts to address the internal challenges, our Government has been making concerted efforts systematically to ensure all-round development and to seek a sustainable solution where all communities in Rakhine State can exist harmoniously.

Being a member country of the United Nations, Myanmar has been cooperating with the international community including the United Nations and doing whatever needs to be done in accordance with national priorities. With regard to taking back the verified displaced persons, we have signed agreements not only with Bangladesh but also with the UNDP and UNHCR to get necessary assistance in the repatriation process. We have also received the support and assistance from ASEAN and many other friends in the region.

In order to promote wider public awareness about the real situation with respect to the Rakhine issue, we have been disseminating continuously the speeches on the efforts made by our Government in the daily newspapers, TV broadcasts, from our own official websites and social media platforms. In addition, we are making concerted efforts from all angles

and all sides including the dispatch of Special Envoys to present our case and explain our position. Myanmar diplomatic and consular missions as well as the Heads of Mission are also disseminating the information in their respective countries. We also gave briefing on updates of the Rakhine issue to the foreign dignitaries visiting Myanmar.

Q: With regard to the Rakhine state issue, what kind of efforts have you made in the region?

Union Minister: Our efforts in the region include promoting our country's image and giving updates by our leaders about the developments in Rakhine State and the complex and sensitive nature of the challenges at the Summit level meetings of the regional groupings such as ASEAN. We have been providing updated information continuously at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting about the measures taken by the Government to address the Rakhine issue. ASEAN indicated their understanding on the complex and sensitive nature of the Rakhine issue and offered their readiness to assist us with the ASEAN family spirit in our efforts to bring peace, stability and development in Rakhine State. Therefore we have been able to seek ASEAN's cooperation to help Myanmar resolve the issue in the areas of our needs at our comfort level in recognition of our national sovereignty.

In accordance with this consultation, we invited the ASEAN Secretary General to visit Rakhine State to determine in what way ASEAN could assist in facilitating the repatriation process. Consequently, we were able to hold the first high-level strategic coordination meeting with ASEAN team. In accordance with the agreement reached with ASEAN to assist us in the repatriation process of displaced persons, the ASEAN ERAT team consisting of representatives from Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Thailand was despatched to Myanmar last March to give training courses to participants in the process for their security and safety. They also visited the reception

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centres and the villages in Rakhine State where the returnees are to be resettled and conducted a preliminary needs assessment. The report of the ASEAN ERAT needs assessment team will be released soon and we will proceed to take necessary steps after identifying the areas of cooperation.

Myanmar delegation also gave a briefing on the recent developments in the Rakhine State at the 22nd ASEAN-EU Ministerial Level Meeting held in Brussels, Belgium on 21 January 2019. Our success in securing the constructive role of ASEAN in facilitating the repatriation process of the verified displaced persons from Rakhine State is a step forward in our diplomatic efforts.

Q: May I know the instances where Myanmar has taken an active participation in international organizations and in International agreements?

Union Minister: Although there have been mounting pressures on Myanmar in the area of human rights and humanitarian situation during the Government's tenure, we have seen improvements in the area of development cooperation. The successful adoption of the normal country programs by the UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and ILO and the meeting of the three requirements for the first time to graduate from list of LDCs in 2018 and signing or ratification of some United Nations agreements could be counted as signs of progress.

Myanmar has signed the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) during the 73rd session of the UNGA, as it is in line with the position of Myanmar regarding the elimination of nuclear weapons. On the sideline of the 10th Edition of Delhi Dialogue held in New Delhi, India, Myanmar signed the policy framework agreement of the International Solar Alliance and became its 68th member.

Q: Please tell me what you have been able to do for protecting the interests of Myanmar nationals abroad?

Union Minister: During the tenure of the current Government, the Myanmar diplomatic missions abroad have been putting greater emphasis to protect and assist Myanmar nationals

and former Myanmar nationals living abroad in line with the people-centered diplomacy. As a result of the reforms, improvements and liberalizations in various sectors, we have been able to give more effective help to the members of Myanmar communities living abroad in resolving their difficulties and problems.

Since the situation at the Myanmar-Thai border has improved in terms of peace and stability, we have been able to take back verified Myanmar nationals, who have been living in the camps for many years and wishing to return on their volition. We are making progress in this matter though our consultation under the G-to-G arrangement with Thailand. After proper ratification, we have welcomed back 70 persons in the first batch, 93 persons in the second batch and 567 persons in the third batch. This is also a significant progress made by the government.

Q: What have you done in boundary matters for achieving progress?

Union Minister: The State Counsellor has given guidance to leave behind a good legacy to



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin.

tions of the border part by part.

On the India-Myanmar border between boundary pillar number (145) and (146) in the Naga region, we have conducted joint border demarcation survey and erected 38 distinct borders posts to build a fence in order to prevent encroachment of building structures from the other side in our territory. We will be negotiating with the Indian side to put up a fence in that area. In the same manner, we were able

For some important posts, we extend the assignments of Ambassadors who are not only well-versed in diplomatic skills but also dedicated energetically to their duties.

the future generation by attaching priority to bringing about completion of many pending border demarcation matters which successive governments were unable to do so.

To resume the border demarcation work that had been stalled, we were able to hold Thai-Myanmar high-level senior officials coordination meetings in both countries to sign a Border Demarcation Agreement as soon as possible. We were thus able to narrow down the gaps that existed in our views and perspectives. After the signing of the said border demarcation agreement, we would be able to demarcate the border for the Pak Chong river and the land border situated in the north about 200 miles. There are plans to demarcate the remaining por-

to erect 30 additional boundary demarcation posts between boundary pillar number (80) and (82) in cooperation with India during the year 2017-2018.

Since we have not been able to undertake verification of demarcation along the Myanmar-Chinese border for the past 23 years, the first preliminary coordination meeting was held in July 2017 to discuss matters relating to the third Myanmar-Chinese Joint Verification of Demarcation Lines. The second preliminary coordination meeting was held in China in March 2019. Disputes arising from construction along the border are being resolved based on the existing friendship and in the spirit of cooperation and good neighborliness.

Q: Please tell us about your plans to open new embassies?

Union Minister: Myanmar diplomatic missions abroad play an important role in implementing the policies and objectives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in conducting diplomatic relations with other countries to promote cooperation in the social and economic fields. At present we have in operation 35 Embassies, 3 Permanent Missions and 6 Consulates-General with a total of 44 diplomatic missions.

The Myanmar Embassies, Permanent Missions and Consulates-General are rendering their services with greater enthusiasm and vigour for the interests of the Myanmar nationals abroad in line with the people-centered diplomacy. Through provision of consular services, they are also contributing in earning revenues for the government and the people. The Ministry has been able to generate incomes by collecting fees for entry visa, passport related services, income tax and other services on behalf of other relevant Ministries. During the past three years, we have received a total of Kyat 95, 864.878 million (US\$ 71.869 million) as revenue for the government.

Q: May I know the current programmes for capacity and skills building at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

Union Minister: Since we need fine diplomats with excellent skills to accomplish the goals of the Ministry, we have been organising a number of capacity building training including

Basic Diplomatic Skills Course, Training for Deputy Chiefs of Mission, Trainings for clerical staff in international relations and English language, and many other courses for interpreters, report writing, and speech writing in collaboration with foreign institutions.

Furthermore, during the third year of our government, we have trained 379 persons by organising Courses on Basic Diplomatic Skills twice for the government employees, entrepreneurs, and young graduates including company employees. Furthermore, we have also conducted Certificate Course in Enhanced Diplomatic Skills (5/2019). One of the new initiatives was the convening of special training courses for the spouses of the diplomats and female foreign service officials on dress code and diplomatic practices for hospitality and entertainment.

Q: Please tell me about your efforts and programs for making sure that Myanmar Foreign Service personnel are able to perform their duties effectively?

Union Minister: For Myanmar Foreign Service personnel to perform their duties effectively, we need highly skilled Ambassadors and dedicated diplomats who are well-motivated and hard working. Thus, in the appointment of Ambassadors, we are now giving priority mainly to those with diplomatic experience. For some important posts, we extend the assignments of Ambassadors who are not only well-versed in diplomatic skills but also dedicated energetically to their duties. This may be one of the significant changes in our approach in the selection.

In order to enable our diplomatic personnel to concentrate solely on performing their duties smoothly without any worry, we have enhanced significantly our administrative support, particularly for their health care and support for educational expenses for their children. During our government's tenure, we have granted health insurances for 24 diplomatic missions out of a total of 44 missions, compared to only 6 missions which were allowed to enjoy health insurance benefits during the previous government. Commencing

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this financial year, the Government is supporting two thirds of the school tuition fees for all eligible children of foreign service personnel to overcome their financial difficulties for education. This is a very significant support given by the government for the interests of our diplomats' families.

In order to elevate the profile of Myanmar diplomats in international relations and to lift their

diplomatic standard and dignity, some buildings of our Embassies have been renovated or rebuilt to turn them into the property of the government. In South Africa and Australia, we are constructing new buildings for our embassies or staff quarters. We have also granted more resources to some of the Myanmar embassies to make major repairs and maintenance as well as for necessary security enhancement projects.

By building government-owned properties in foreign countries, we have reduced the rising cost for accommodation and saved the government expenditures. Starting from this year, the Myanmar Embassy in Singapore has discontinued the contract with a private visa service company and managed to provide the same service using its own personnel of the Embassy.

Q: Are there any ad-

ditional comments you wish to make as concluding remarks?

Union Minister: As we strive to improve our relations with the international community, the Rakhine issue is obviously placing a big obstacle. Thus, overcoming this great challenge is our utmost priority and important duty.

In our efforts to improve the image of Myanmar and to resolve all the challenges including the issue of the Rakhine

State, the Government needs constructive, active and energetic support and collaboration of all Myanmar people at home and abroad, and all institutions. With the help of our friendly countries who understand our situation and with the mobilisation of the collective strength and unity of our people, we must continue to exert our concerted efforts to get the truth and justice prevail eventually. In resolving the Rakhine State issue,

our Government has taken into consideration all differing views and kept in our hearts and minds the interests of the State and the people with a fair and pragmatic approach. Therefore, I wish to urge all of you to join us in unity in helping our Ministry in implementing the programmes which are in line with the policy of the Government elected by the people.— *(Translated by Kyaw Myaing)*

Second Amyotha Hluttaw's 12th regular session holds ...

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Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than then announced for Hluttaw representatives who want to discuss the bill to register their names. Bill Committee report on Bill to amend Bar Council Act

Next Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee member U Aung Thein read and explained a bill committee report on a bill to amend Bar Council Act.

Afterwards Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker obtained the decision of the Hluttaw and approved as amended by Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee the bill to amend Bar Council Act re-

turned by Pyithu Hluttaw with amendments.

As there was disagreement between the two Hluttaws on the bill, U Hsan Myint of Ayeyawady Region constituency 3 tabled a motion for Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to discuss and decide on the disagreement. Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker then announced that the disagreement between the two Hluttaws on the bill to amend Bar Council Act will be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. The third day meeting of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw's 12th regular session will be held on 3 May.— Aung Ye Thwin (MNA) ■ *(Translated by Zaw Min)*

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(c)	DMP/L-207(18-19)	Spares For Cooper Well Servicing Unit (35) Items	Ks
(d)	DMP/L-208(18-19)	Spares for Cat G 3412 Gas Engine (5) Items	Ks
(e)	DMP/L-209(18-19)	Radial Bearing for N-69 Swivel (3) Nos	Ks
(f)	DMP/L-210(18-19)	3 ¾" Tri Cone Rock Bits (3) Items	Ks
(g)	DMP/L-211(18-19)	Mechanical Accessories (3) Groups	Ks

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- The ED is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the organization's short and long-term work plan.
- The ED manages all administrative and operational matters of the ASEAN Foundation (including policies, budget and staffing).
- The ED will play a significant role in securing the financial resources required to sustain and grow the ASEAN Foundation's initiatives and programmes, as well as build positive working relations with external stakeholders. The ED reports to the Board of Trustees of the ASEAN Foundation.

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- Be a national of an ASEAN Member State
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