

Cultural heritage region of Bagan crowded with pilgrims

ON the full-moon day of Thadingyut, the Bagan region of ancient cultural heritage was crowded with pilgrims from both home and abroad, it was learnt.

“This year, school holidays coincided with long holidays of businesses and offices, making holiday-makers, especially local ones, go on more trips than last year. At many famous pagodas, there are traffic jams, especially at sunset. Being over-crowded with many vehicles some had to go back to their lodging places, without being able to enjoy the scenic views”, one of the tour

guides said.

Due to the influx of local pilgrims to Bagan this year, all hotels, motels and lodging houses have been booked since a week prior to the full moon day. Some local visitors were staying at monasteries in Bagan and Nyaung-U, with some pilgrims finding it difficult to find for lodging even for a night, it was learnt.

“We have come to know that it is required to book rooms for lodging in advance when paying a pilgrimage visit to Bagan. It is okay for men to sleep in cars, whereas we are not. To our great



Pilgrims lighting candles at Shwezigon Pagoda on the full moon day of Thadingyut in Bagan. **PHOTO: YE THURA AUNG (NYAUNG-U)**

pleasure, we had a good time from this Bagan visit”, said one female pilgrim.

A myriad of visitors from home and abroad visited the Bagan region, a bonanza period for eateries, souvenir and craft

shops, traditional clothes shops, vehicular businesses and bike rental businesses in Bagan and Nyaung-U, it was learnt.

At the night of full-moon day of Thadingyut, famous pagodas in the region — Shwe See

Gone, Ananda, Ah Lo Daw Pyae, Buu pagoda, Lawka Nanda, Hti-lo-Minlo pagodas are heavily congested with pilgrims, with local residents donating candle lights to the pagodas.—Ye Thura Aung (Nyaung-U) ■



The map shows the flow of members of the Muslim community from northern Rakhine State into Bangladesh continues. **PHOTO: MNA**

Muslims from Buthidaung Township at border to cross into Bangladesh

THE flow of members of the Muslim community from northern Rakhine State into Bangladesh continues, with large numbers of villagers gathering near the border to prepare for the crossing.

The Muslim villagers said they are leaving Myanmar due to livelihood difficulties, health problems, a belief in a lack of village security, a fear of becoming a minority and wanting to join others of their own race in Bangladesh. Large number of Muslim villagers from Buthidaung Township left for Bangladesh starting on 26 September and continue to mass near the border.

Upon learning of the departure of another group of Muslim villagers from Buthidaung

Township, security personnel in Maungtau Township conducting law enforcement measures went to inspect one of the gathering places on 3 October afternoon and found about 730 villagers from Kadi Village, Payapyinaungpa Village and Theintaung Village on the beach near Layinpyankwin Village, Maungtau Township and 382 villagers from Nanyakone village tract, Condine village tract, Thapyaychaung village tract, Darpaingsaya village tract and Ywetnyotaung village tract near Ngayantchaung Village, Maungtau Township. Another inspection on 4 October found a total of 1,443 villagers from Gudapyin village, Ponnyolate village and Thabataung (south) village near the

mouth of Gawduthara creek.

From 26 September to 5 October, the number of people massing at the border who have left their villages were: on 26 September, 168 near Ywathit Village; on 27 September, 771 at a beach near Layinpyankwin village; on 28 September, 895 at the beach near Layinpyankwin village; on 29 September, 538 between the border fence and Panyaungbingyi village; on 3 October, 12,094 near the mouth of Gawduthara creek, 730 at a beach near Layinpyankwin village and 382 near Ngayantchaung village; on 4 October, 1,443 between Panyaungbingyi village and Ywathit village, for a total of 17,013. —Myanmar News Agency ■

One man arrested, arms, ammunition, mines seized

SECURITY personnel conducting law enforcement measures on Wednesday acted on a tip-off and searched the vicinity of Thawunchaung village and found weapons, ammunition and landmines. The perpetrators are suspected of being members of the ARSA, a terrorist group.

Security personnel found a 12-gauge smooth-bore shotgun with 14 shells, two string-activated IEDs measuring 5 inches in diameter and 8 inch in length,

two IEDs operated by remote control measuring 2 inch in diameter and 9 inches in length, three hand-made, 9-inch long steel pipe grenades, one hand grenade, one silver-coloured smoke grenade, two flares measuring 1.5 inches in diameter and 11 inches in length, two flares measuring 1.5 inches in diameter and 6 inches in length, nine key hooks commonly used for detonating IEDs, two batteries, and a connector measuring 3

inches x 2 inches x 1 inch connected with wires in a bush at the bottom of Mayu Mountain about 1,000 meters northeast of Thawunchaung village.

On Wednesday, after receiving a report of suspected terrorists arriving nearby, security personnel searched Myomakanyintan village tract and caught Mahmet Ayid, aged 23 with a steel sword about 18 inches long. —Myanmar News Agency ■



Arms, ammunition and landmines discovered on 4 October. **PHOTO: MNA**

Need to prioritise eradication of terrorism

Khin Maung Oo

STARTING from the early hours of August 25, over 30 security outposts in northern Rakhine State were severely destroyed in coordinated surprise attacks by ARSA extremist terrorists. As a result, many local nationals and residents were killed, injured and later relocated to safer places. Yet, news on these actual events were not mentioned at all by UN senior officials and on the websites of international media agencies, whereas affairs of refugees fleeing Maungdaw to take shelter in the neighboring country were being discussed over and over again and spoken aloud almost always appearing at the top of the agenda.

These affairs were actually due to the atrocious attacks and killings of ARSA extremist terrorists, but in the interna-

tional media there were nonstop discussions about refugee affairs, completely ignoring the terrorist attacks. By seeing this, we may note with regret that most of the international media were sympathetic to the terrorists. At the present time, many places all over the world are being attacked by extremist terrorists. It is ironic that the countries which have been loudly speaking about refugee affairs are facing the dangers of these extremist terrorists themselves.

Recently, it was learnt that an overseas-based media company conducted an interview with the one who got involved in the attack together with ARSA extremist terrorists, from a refugee camp near the Bangladesh border. We would no longer like to claim that the media company was the one encouraging terrorism. But it is

doubtful whether the camp was a refugee camp or a terrorist camp. In actuality, refugees and terrorists mingled freely in this refugee camp. Very recently, Bangladesh security forces seized some ARSA extremist terrorists together with weapons.

Across the world, extremist terrorists are being eradicated. But it can be assumed that terrorists are separately hiding, rather than they are being split. The Rakhine State affair of Myanmar is similar to these, so the Myanmar Government will systematically solve the problem with the spirit of humanitarianism. Accordingly, the United Nations and the international community should call for all communities to effectively deal with the dangers of extremist terrorists.

To our great sorrow, on October 1, while celebrating a music festival at Las

Vegas, in Nevada State, USA, a lone gunman fired into a crowd, killing 59 innocent people and injuring over 500. On Sept 15 as well, there was a bomb-blast on board the London Sub-way train, injuring at least 22 people. Meanwhile, 84 innocent people were killed in the attacks of ISIS's extremist groups in southern Iraq. In last May, over 20 people were killed in the bomb-blast at the stage show in Manchester, UK. In the recent attacks of terrorists, over 100 innocent were killed with nearly 100 people are missing.

These events are in fact the attacks of extremist terrorists. We firmly believe that the UN and all the nations of the world should make concerted efforts for the eradication of terrorism as a priority, so that further atrocious killings and displacements will not happen again. ■

The truth behind the northern Rakhine issue

Khin Maung Myint

THE following is the truest and most comprehensive account of the presence the self-identified race in northern-Rakhine in Myanmar. I claimed thus, because it was written without any prejudice or bias toward any race or religion. Also, it was written based on the personal experiences of a person, who had an in depth knowledge of the history of the emergence of the self-identified term and not from hearsays from either sides of the conflicts or from the lobbyists, NGOs and various envoys, rapporteurs, who are mostly biased. That person is me.

In the international media, both in the print and on the broadcast media, and also on the Internet social media, I had come across a lot of untrue stories. Most of them recognized the illegal Muslims as belonging to the self-identified who are being persecuted and denied citizenship by a country, in which they are one of the ethnic races. Those are absolute absurdities, falsely fabricated and misrepresented, with bad intentions and lack of journalistic ethics on the part of the international media. As for the social media, I have nothing to say as it is a place for everyone to voice their opinions freely and frankly and have heated debates, but lacked authenticity and reliability. Those with little or no knowledge of a particular issue or topic should not join the debates on the social media to discuss sensitive matters such as this issue.

Most of those who advocate for the so-called self-identified race claim that those people had been on our soil for many centuries, some even claiming that they had settled in the Rakhine

areas of Myanmar since the eighth century. That claim needs clarification, though the date is not a big issue, what is important is whether the people who migrated to those area in those days were really the people who mainly involved in the current northern Rakhine issue. To my knowledge, and I am quite confident that I am correct, they were people from the East Bengal State of India, which evolved into the present day Bangladesh. So, naturally they were Bengalis and being Bengalis, they could be Hindus and Buddhists only, as these were the domestic religions of those eras, years before the spread of Islam to those areas.

Another point to take into consideration is the fact that in the olden days there were no mutually accepted, well defined boundaries between the countries in our region like elsewhere in the world. The boundaries were only arbitrary, depending on which country was superior in military power at that time. Thus it can be assumed that the borders were always shifting from time to time. Besides, the borders may not be properly demarcated and people of different races and religions could freely roam from place to place, in search of greener pastures and suitable dwelling places to settle. This assumption is proved by the fact that there are many Rakhine and even some Bamar descendants living today in Bangladesh as citizens of that country. Likewise there are many Bengalis living in Myanmar as Myanmar citizens. Those who had been to the Maungdaw, Buthitaung and Rathetaung areas will know that more than ninety percents of the population are Bengalis some of who hold Myanmar citizen identifications. Also other

parts of the Rakhine State have many Bengalis residing there officially as Myanmar citizens. Even many other parts of the country have their share of Bengalis today. In Yangon, their community have increased noticeable and most of them are well established in various businesses. Many of them are more prosperous than the other average Myanmar citizens of Indian origins. So, where are their claims of persecutions? They are enjoying the full rights of the citizenship and in some cases they may be even getting more privileges than other national races as they are receiving aids from foreign Muslim countries.

Here, I would like to differentiate between our citizens of Bengali origin and the illegal Bengalis who are claiming to be a race of Myanmar, a non-existent race throughout our history. If you will go back in time for about two centuries, you will find yourself back in 1824, when the British annexed Arakan (now Rakhine). Even then, there must be quite a large population of Bengalis who were from the India proper, already in Arakan area, as Rakhine of today was used to be called. The British passed a statute, which recognized the Bengalis who were already there at the time of their annexation, as citizens of Burma (Myanmar) and those who came later as foreigners. Those people were mostly from Chittagong area, thus they were known in the old days as Chittagonians, which in Myanmar language they became "Khawtaws". Most of them were laborers or "colliers", in the Indian jargon. As most of the regions in their homeland were always inundated the whole year round, even today, they came to Rakhine to work as farm hands

during the paddy cultivation seasons and returned to their native places after the harvests. The Arakan or Rakhine area was known to them as "Rohin", and those returning from "Rohin" were called "Rohingya", meaning "return-ee from Arakan", by the people back in their native land. Thus it's quite evident, the self-identified term does not represent a race but just a description to identify them. Those returnees from Arakan were nomadic peoples, without any permanent settlement. This statement can be clarified if you will care to go to Chittagong and make some inquiries. Some old timers there, who are not biased will tell you that my statement is true. They are scorned by many local people there.

My experience with them was nearly four and a half decades ago, while I was posted in Akyab (Sittway). In 1969, a campaign to screen and sort out the illegal immigrants and expel them by the route they entered into our country, was launched. The nature of my posting at that time put me in a position to take charge of that campaign, that was code named "Kyeegunn Sitsinyae" in Myanmar, which can be translated as "The Operation Crow". Over two hundred immigration officers, drawn from all over the country were placed at my disposal. The campaign was conducted in three townships, namely: Mrauk Oo, Pauktaw and Minpya in the Sittway District.

Our columns entered the villages during the nights, assisted by local policemen for security, as those areas were still not safe due to insurgency. They looked for suspicious Bengalis and asked for their National Registration Cards (NRC).

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Those who could not produce any identifications to prove their citizenships were rounded up, which numbered over two thousand. Those persons were thoroughly interrogated to identify their nationalities and almost all of them said they were Bengalis and admitted to be from the neighboring country. Some try to bluff in the beginning, but on further investigations they too were found to be illegal immigrants.

They were transported, to the Taungpro, close to the border with the other country. There they were individually asked again, from which country they were from and all answered they were from East Pakistan, as Bangladesh was known in those days and pointed their fingers towards that direction. After confirming thus, they were allowed to return to their native country and they crossed the shallow river dividing the two countries to return to where they came from without any protest.

That confirmed they were illegal immigrants. There was no outcry, whatsoever, from their community or the international communities, objecting their expulsion. Destitute people from the cyclone frequented and flood prone areas of the neighboring country entered our country to work as farm hands or coolies during the paddy growing seasons.

Most usually returned to their homeland after the harvests. Later many people did not return at all. They mingle with the local Bengalis, who were naturalized citizens and some even managed

to get NRC cards through illegal means. Over the years, since the British times, these people had been coming and going between the two countries at will. It was understandable, while under the British, as our country and theirs' were ruled as one—the British India. Thus it can be assumed that there were not much restrictions at the border crossings. However, after our Independence the incumbent government, irresponsibly recognized some later day illegal immigrants as citizens to gain the majority seats in the parliament. That was a grave mistake. The root cause of the recent communal conflicts was the influx of these aliens, which, in my opinion was left unchecked for nearly four decades since we were forced to accept the expellee, back in the mid nineteen seventies. My understanding was, more than double the amount of those actually expelled had to be taken back. That was a blow below the belt or in other words, our sovereignty had been undermined by the international communities who lobbied the United Nations General Assembly to pass the unfair resolution to receive the expellee back. It was not only their fault, but also our authorities, especially those who carried out the expulsions at that time were also to be blamed. Because, as I had stated somewhere in this article, when we expelled the aliens, there was no outcry or problem whatsoever, at home or abroad.

Here, I think I should make some clarifications as to who those so-called self-identified race is. I had already mentioned above that there was never an ethnic race in Myanmar

known as the self-identified term. They were in fact Bengali or Chittagonian collies who migrated to the Rakhine during paddy cultivating seasons and returned to their place of origin after the harvests since the olden days. Then how come, today,

This is not an issue of race or religion, but the problem of desperate and destitute peoples in search of greener pastures, using the excuse of being persecuted in Myanmar to make their migration to third countries easier.

they are claiming to be one of the Myanmar national races, who are being denied citizenship and are being persecuted? Their design is quite clear. They are using that false claim as a ploy to get recognized as the citizens of Myanmar, legitimizing their stays, even if it is only temporary, before they can proceed to another country and claim refugee status and to eventually get settled in a third country. My analysis and deduction is: it is just a ploy or a ruse to pave their way for their exodus to more prosperous places. Most of the boat people found in the region, claiming to be from Myanmar are in fact

from the neighboring country and most had never ever set foot on our soil. To further make my point more strong I will mention one incident, which I think, not many people knew about it. In 1969/70, an ungrounded movement organization was uncovered in Sittway and its leader and members apprehended. The documents confiscated from them revealed they were members of the Rohingya Muslim Independence Revolutionary Front (RMIRF). I do not think it would be necessary to point out what sort of an organization that was, judging from the usage of the words Independence, Revolutionary and Front. At the time they were exposed, we deduced that it was the reemergence of the Mujahideen Rebellion of the nineteen fifties that had been wiped out a long time ago. Their objectives were to continue the lost cause of that rebellion: to liberate the Northern Rakhine to establish a Muslim enclave. Their actions undermine the sovereignty of our country. However, after they failed to achieve that goal, they must have changed their strategy. Instead of taking up arms and fighting for Independence as they first set out to do, they are trying to swallow our ethnic races by the influx of illegal immigrants getting recognized as belonging to a national race or acquire citizenship statuses and eventually flush out the local Rakhines altogether. The world media, the international communities and even the UN fell for their deceit and are sympathetic to them.

If one should surf the website # Rohingya on the Internet, one would find that not only just a few persons from within our country, but many others from abroad, are carrying out propagandas extensively. I doubt those people really know where the Rakhine State is, though they are loudly denouncing the persecutions of the non-existent race. Surprisingly there is one person, with high credentials from an American university, who claims he is a Bamar, Buddhist and is the most active advocate for the so-called term. There is no reason for him to claim thus to speak up for the non-existent race, as this is not an issue of race or religion, but the problem of desperate and destitute peoples in search of greener pastures, using the excuse of being persecuted in Myanmar to make their migration to third countries easier. I am surprised to learn that they are gaining much attentions and sympathies worldwide. I cannot imagine the gullibility of those who believed them.

Before concluding, I would like to make my stand concerning the northern Rakhine issue clear. I am neither anti Muslim nor anti Bengali. I am not against the real descendants of the naturalized citizens of Bengali origins, getting recognized as citizens. This is their birth rights if they are born and bred in Myanmar, of parents both of whom are naturalized citizens. However, I am of the opinion that the later day illegal immigrants are entirely untitled to be granted the citizenship.

Raw opium, ICE and yaba pills seized

An anti-narcotics squad from Hpa-an searched a vehicle driven by Myo Zaw Win, also known as Kalay Nge, on Hap-an-Hlaing-bwe Road in Hpa-an at 4pm on Wednesday and confiscated 1,000 yaba pills and a phone handset from Myo Zaw Win. On the same day, an anti-narcotics squad from the northern Yangon Region searched Nay Htet Lin, also known as Tayokekyi, on Thamine Road, Ward 2 in Mayangone Township, at 4:30 pm. The

police seized 2,000 yaba pills and a phone handset from him. The squad also searched his house at No (123/A), Karyathukha street, Ward 12 in Yankin Township at 6pm and found 600 yaba pills and 0.45 grams of crystal methamphetamine, or ice.

Similarly, Lashio police force searched a motorcycle driven by Thaug Tin in Nwangkhio Township on Muse-Mandalay Union Road near the Oriental Toll gate at 3:30am on Wednesday and

found 580 yaba pills. On the same day, an anti-narcotics squad from Tachilek stopped and searched a motorcycle driven by Law Kyu together with Li Gya on board at Lwalsiton village, Wanlone village-tract in Tachilek Township. The police discovered 1,330 yaba pills and 100 grams of raw opium on them. Police have taken action against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force ■



Nay Htet Lin (a) Tayokekyi seen together with drugs. PHOTO: MPF

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their works to the Global New Light of Myanmar at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon or by email to dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Real name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar news office