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# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, right, with the Bangladesh Minister for Home Affairs Mr. Asaduzzaman in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

## Myanmar, Bangladesh agree to solve border issue amicably

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the Bangladesh Minister for Home Affairs Mr. Asaduzzaman in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, discussing security and rule of law at border areas between the two countries and repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh.

"During the discussion, the Union Minister expressed her firm conviction that issues arising between two neighbours such as border security and rules of law, can be solved

bilaterally, in an amicable manner, and discussed further cooperation on the repatriation after verification processes for refugees in Bangladesh," said a news report by the Myanmar News Agency.

The meeting comes a day after the ministerial meeting on Border Security and Law Enforcement Cooperation between the two countries.

At the meeting on Tuesday, the two countries reached a 10-point agreement

on refugees.

The agreement includes: "Stopping immediate entry by refugees into Bangladesh and repatriation of refugees at the earliest date and restoring normalcy in Rakhine Region for their resettlement."

Both sides also agreed to form a joint working committee this coming November to arrange resettlement.

"I am not sure how many people would be repatriated, but that would be carried out

based on the National Verification process of the Immigration and Population Ministry," said U Tin Myint, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, to reporters following the meeting.

Both sides also agreed to cooperate in fighting terrorism and opening border liaison offices, especially in Maungdaw and the border areas, fighting illegal migration through borders, and fighting drug trafficking.

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## Rakhine resettlement will be fast-tracked

A committee whose responsibility will be to implement recommendations for Rakhine State has committed itself to completing the tasks despite some challenges ahead, said Dr Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, in his capacity as the chairman of the committee.

He made the remark at the 4<sup>th</sup> work coordination meeting of the committee in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. "Despite challenges ahead, we will overcome them and will accelerate our efforts," the Union Minister said, also urging the members of the committee to make decisive actions to achieve success in implementing the recommendations. To effectively implement the recommendations, the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) project which is also being launched in Rakhine will work with the committee, he said. The Union minister also expressed thanks to businessmen, international and local non-governmental organisations and the people, including youths, of the country for their active participation in the drive for rehabilitation and resettlement of the people affected by the terrorist attacks in northern Rakhine.

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## BEST BANK IN MYANMAR

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## Pyithu Hluttaw

2<sup>nd</sup> Pyithu Hluttaw 6<sup>th</sup> regular session holds its 4<sup>th</sup> day meeting

AT the 4<sup>th</sup> day meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pyithu Hluttaw 6<sup>th</sup> day session held yesterday, Dr Tun Naing, Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy, replied to a question raised by U Ne Myo Htet of Kyauktada constituency.

“Out of five fertilizer plants under Myanmar petroleum chemical enterprise, No. 2 fertilizer plant (Kyun Chaung) and No. 3 fertilizer plant (Kyaw Zwa) stopped production a long time ago, having suffered great losses. No. 2 Kyun Chaung fertilizer plant was built in 1968 by the Pintsch Bamag Co. of Germany, operated by using inland natural gas from the Kyauk Khwet, Ayardaw, Thargyitaung oil fields. It had production capacity of 207 tons of fertilizer per day, (which it produced) for 49 years. No. 3



U Kyaw Myo, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications. **PHOTO: MNA**

Kyaw Zwa fertilizer plant was built in 1982 by UHDE GmbH Co. of Germany, operating by the use of inland natural gas from the Pyay oil field. It had the capacity of producing 600 tons of fertilizer a day, (which it did) for 35 years.”

The Deputy Minister added,



Dr Tun Naing, Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy. **PHOTO: MNA**

“Now, as inland natural gas is decreasing in production from the above-said oil fields, No. 2 Kyun Chaung fertilizer plant stopped its production on 31st May 2009, with production from No. 3 Kyaw Zwa fertilizer plant stopped on 7th September 2010. Due to long

periods of production, amount of inland natural gas decreased and a shortage of raw material needed for fertilizer production, the plants had been stopped. There have no plans for production of fertilizer in cooperation with private entrepreneurs. Now, liquidation of the two plants is under way.”

Afterward, U Kyaw Myo, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications, replied to the question raised by U Ohn Khin of Palaw constituency.

“Survey and registration of waterway vehicles over 20hp are directly managed by Region and State Waterway Transport Directorate Offices. In surveying those kinds of vehicles, it must be examined as to whether there is strength of the vehicular ma-

chines, and whether staff is well qualified or not. Accordingly, examining officers who have completed examining officer training courses conducted by the department of waterway transportation has to calculate tonnage of cargo to be loaded by measuring oneself based on fundamental rules and experiences achieved from the training. With the high power of the machines in waterway vehicles, strength of the vehicles, security of fire-outbreak, sufficiency of the life-saving equipment are needed to be systematically checked. For now, there has no plan to empower the right of survey and registration of waterway vehicles with more than 20HP to the general administration department.”—Aye Aye Thant (MNA) ■

## Amyotha Hluttaw

2<sup>nd</sup> Amyotha Hluttaw 6<sup>th</sup> regular session holds its 4<sup>th</sup> day meeting

AT the 4<sup>th</sup> day meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amyotha Hluttaw 6<sup>th</sup> regular session held at 10 am yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, Dr Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, replied to a question raised by Daw Htu May of constituency 11, Rakhine State on the region's preparedness against storms.

“Rakhine State is situated along the coast, so it is naturally in the storm-prone area. Accordingly it faces risks of storms annually and construction of cyclone resistant shelters is under way in cooperation of Union Government and Rakhine State Cabinet. The department of relief and resettlement had already built 12 units of cyclone shelters during the period—from FY 2013-2014 to 2016-2017 with



Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

the national natural disaster management fund”, Dr Win Myat Aye said.

The Union Minister added, “In the fiscal year 2015-2016, 10 cyclone shelters were built under the arrangement of Rakhine State Government. In the coming year — 2018, a total of 32 units of multi-purpose cyclone shelters

are to be built — 28 to be built under the national natural disaster management fund and four others to be built with the donation of Bangladesh. These shelters will be completed in 2018. More cyclone shelters are to be built after making necessary surveys depending upon the desires of local populace and parliamentarians' demands.”

As regards the questions raised by U Ko Ko Naing of constituency 8, Sagaing Region, U Min Oo of constituency 6 of Bago Region and U Lin Tin Htay of constituency 4 of Mon State, Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye and Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw replied respectively. —Myanmar News Agency ■

## Myanmar, Bangladesh agree to solve...

## FROM PAGE-1

“Both sides mainly discussed establishing the border liaison offices, promoting information, exchange and understanding between the two countries and formation of joint working groups. Our side mainly discussed going through the process step by step, especially in the information exchange sec-

tor,” said U Kyaw Zeya, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“We also discussed the agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh signed in 1992 and the four agreements between immigration official-level meetings between the two countries in 2000, he added.

Though Rohingya fami-

lies have lived in Myanmar for generations, they are denied citizenship and access to basic civil rights such as freedom of movement, decent education and healthcare.

Hundreds in Rakhine on Sunday protested to urge Myanmar's government not to repatriate the Rohingya.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than welcomes United Nations Resident Coordinator Ms. Renata Nicola Lok-Dessallien in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

## Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives UN Resident Coordinator in Myanmar

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than received United Nations Resident Coordinator Ms. Renata Nicola Lok-Dessallien at the receptionist room of Amyotha Hluttaw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they discussed about cooperation

of UN and Myanmar and ongoing agendas about developmental processes of the Hluttaw.

Deputy Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw U Aye Tha Aung and other officials also attended the meeting. —Myanmar News Agency ■



President U Htin Kyaw and wife Daw Su Su Lwin arrive in Don Mueang Airport in Bangkok to attend the funeral of Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Renata Nicola Lok-Dessallien. **PHOTO: MNA**

## President and wife in Bangkok for Thai king's funeral

A delegation led by U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and his wife Daw Su Su Lwin, departed for Thailand yesterday to attend the funeral of Thailand's former king Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The President and party were seen off at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Vice Presidents U Myint Swe and U Hnery Van Thio, Senior General Min

Aung Hlaing, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr Myo Aung and wife, Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command General Myint Maw, Thailand Ambassador to Myanmar, Mr. Jukr Boon-Long and wife and other officials. The delegation led by the President arrived at Don Mueang International Airport in Bangkok Thailand at 4 pm. Thailand's Justice Minister General Paiboon Koom-

chaya, Dr Atchaka Sibunruang, the Thai Minister of Science and Technology, the Myanmar Ambassador to Thailand U Myo Myint Than and wife, the Myanmar Military Attaché in Bangkok Brig-Gen Khin Zaw and wife welcomed the President and party at the airport. The President and delegation were then transported to Okura Prestige Hotel in Bangkok— Myanmar News Agency ■

## State Counsellor receives United Nations Resident Coordinator

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received United Nations Resident Coordinator Ms. Renata Nicola Lok-Dessallien at 11:00 hrs on 25 October 2017 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting,

they exchanged views on the issues relating to the cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations and Myanmar Government's determination to resolve issues in Rakhine State with the cooperation of the people.—Myanmar News Agency ■

## Rakhine resettlement will be fast-tracked

**FROM PAGE-1**

He also stressed the important role of the media in chronicling the rehabilitation and resettlement efforts by UEHRD and the committee on implementing recommendations on Rakhine State.

When implementing the tasks, acceptance among all groups should be taken into account, said U Nyi Pu, Chief Minister of Rakhine State.

"While working for development of the state, they expect that the two communities can live in harmony," U Nyi Pu said.— Myanmar News Agency ■

## Housing for displaced people to be built with UN-HABITAT technical assistance in northern Rakhine

UN-HABITAT has agreed with the government to provide technical assistance in building housings for displaced people in northern Rakhine.

UN-HABITAT's Senior Human Settlements Officer Mr. Bruno Dercon also said at the meeting with Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday that the UN agency will work closely with ministries concerned to implement the projects to be favourable to Myanmar's social culture and administrative system.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye is also the vice-chairman of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, the chairman of the

committee on implement recommendations on Rakhine State.

At the meeting, he said the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) invited UN-HABITAT to Myanmar to discuss housing for local ethnic villagers and Muslim villagers so that the resettlement for the communities affected by the terrorist attacks could possess similar village characteristics.

The suggestions from the UN agency would be helpful for UEHRD's efforts for rehabilitation, resettlement and repatriation of refugees and their development and for eliminating areas of conflict in the future.

UEHRD is also currently working on the construction of houses for the villagers in north-



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye, centre right, holds talks with UN-HABITAT's Senior Human Settlements Officer Mr. Bruno Dercon, left, centre, at a meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on 25 October 2017. **PHOTO: MNA**

ern Rakhine.

Construction of houses for villagers are being carried out by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Border Affairs and other related ministries, including the Rakhine State Govern-

ment in cooperation with private donors.

UN-HABITAT will meet with respective ministries and the Rakhine State government on 8 November.—Myanmar News Agency ■

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

# MOALI signs MoU with CCA for My Finance Project

WITH a view to long-lasting survival of cooperative businesses and township cooperatives in central Myanmar, the Cooperative Department under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Canadian Cooperative Association (CCA) for My Finance Project yesterday at Grand Amara Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw.

Present at the signing ceremony were Union Minister Dr Aung Thu, permanent secretary U Kyaw Ngwe and directors-general, Executive Director Mr. Michael Casey from CCA and officials from cooperatives.

The Union Minister gave an opening speech at the signing ceremony and



Director-general of the Cooperative Department U Aung Phyu and CCA Executive Director Mr. Michael Casey signing a MoU to implement My Finance Project in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Executive Director from CCA explained My Finance Project.

U Aung Phyu, director-gen-

eral of the Cooperative Department and CCA Executive Director Mr. Michael Casey signed a

MoU to establish long-lasting vocational schools, implement My Finance Project spending US\$3 million to establish people-based organisations, cooperatives and financial organisations in order to reduce poverty.

During 32 months of that project, training courses will be conducted to the members of cooperatives, executive members and staff from Myingyan, Natogyi, Taungtha, Pakokku, Yes-aygo townships. A pledge fund will be set up. Also, there will be exchange visit and workshop. This project will support to introduce ways to make money to the members of cooperatives in a bid to build trust with them, cover vesting, help develop monetary planning to purchase highly demanded input and marketing strategy. —Myanmar News Agency ■

# Floods cause destruction of betel farms, doubles the price

THE price of betel leaf has doubled after floods destroyed betel farms in Kyaiklat Township in Ayeyawady Region, according to yesterday's report of City News.

Floods inundated betel farms in some villages of Kyaiklat Township in June and July.

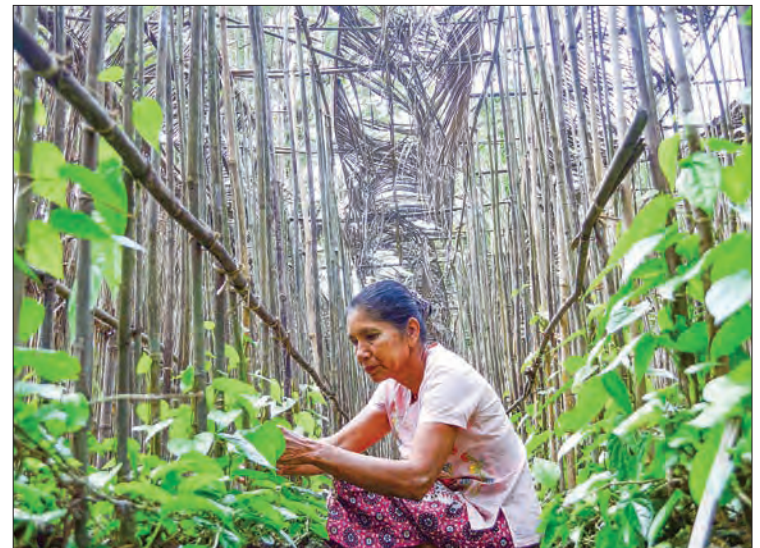
The destruction of betel farms quickly led to unusually high prices. Betel leaf did not fetch a good price shortly after betel farm owners plucked the leaves early as an immediate response to flood.

At present, the price has

soared. The betel plants are newly cultivated in some areas but the yield is low. The scarcity of supply has forced the price higher, said a betel farm owner.

The betel price in June and July was only Ks2,500 per viss (3.6 pounds). Betel leaves fetched up to Ks8,000 per viss for special quality and Ks6,500 for normal quality.

The betel price was on the rise during rainy season. The price shoots up when the supply is low, as it has good quality and steady demand, said a betel seller.—GNLM ■



A woman nurtures betel plants at her farm in Bogalay, Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

# Hotel zone planned for Kanthaya beach in Rakhine State

A hotel zone will be developed at Kanthaya beach in Gwa Township, Rakhine State for tourism development, according to yesterday's report of Myawady Daily.

The plan hopes to convince local visitors and

tourists to stop in Gwa Township en route to Ngapali beach in Thandwe Township, Rakhine State.

The authorities will supervise operations to ensure cheaper hotel prices and guesthouses in this zone.

To develop the hotel zone, the tourist site will be created in the Zeegon area near Kanthaya Beach, complete with souvenir shops, recreation sites, hotels and guesthouses.

Moreover, bridges and roads will be upgraded to en-

sure smooth transport from Gwa Township to Thandwe Township in about two hours time. At present, a master plan has been drawn up for the hotel zone project and tender invitations will soon be announced.—GNLM ■

## Implementation Coordination Meeting on Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

A meeting was held in the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre office in Yangon yesterday morning to discuss the negotiation process between the Union Government and armed ethnic groups towards the nationwide ceasefire agreement.

The opening remarks at the meeting were given by Union Attorney General U Htun Htun Oo, Tatmadaw Representative Lieutenant General Yar Pyae, and the head of the NCA appraisal committee Yebaw Than Gae.

U Htun Htun Oo said the appraisal meeting was held with agreement from everybody and that it was necessary to review the decisions made and what steps were necessary to move forward.

"I believe that we were able to carry out most of the NCA's necessary requirements," said U Htun Htun Oo.

He said they were able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the NCA meeting and figure out the steps needed to move forward.

He said that the NCA's view-



A joint implementation coordination meeting on Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement held in progress in Yangon on 25 October 2017. **PHOTO: PHOE HTAUNG**

point was mostly from the ethnic people's perspective and was carried out since the previous government's administration.

Lt-Gen Yar Pyae said the realisation of the NCA agreement took two years to complete, but that the current processes were not utilised in the negotiations, so it is needed to control the current progress. The current necessary structure of the NCA will

be discussed in the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) meetings.

Lt-Gen Yar Pyae said it is up to the government and the ethnic armed groups to make sure the traction of the NCA meeting does not halt so that we reach the federal democracy that our country envisioned. He said the NCA is a means to reach a fed-

eral democratic country and that it is important for both sides to discuss which part of the NCA needs more attention. He hopes that, "we as ethnic brothers discuss this with brotherly spirit in our hearts."

There are seven parts to the NCA agreement: (1) The basics (2) Goals (3) Ceasefire Agreements (4) Strengthening Ceasefire agreements (5) Agree-

ments on Political Dialogue (6) Necessary steps moving forward (7) Miscellaneous.

NCA appraisal committee Yebaw Than Gae said there were some difficulties during the implementation of the NCA agreements. He said the meeting was focused on finding solutions for those difficulties. The first and second part of the NCA were focused on agreements of policies. He said the third and fourth parts of the NCA were focused on the Joint Monitoring Committee, and the fifth part was more of a political roadmap. He said the sixth part of the NCA was for affairs during the intervals of the agreement to focus on education, IDPs and other cases between the two sides.

"We will overcome the different parts together," said Yebaw Than Gae. The meeting held yesterday was attended by 11 members of the union government, Hluttaw and Tatmadaw and eleven other representatives of armed ethnic groups who signed the NCA agreement. —Ye Khaung Nyunt ■



Medical officer giving a medical check-up to a Hindu woman in the IDP camp in Sittway. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

## Healthcare for Hindus in Sittway IDP camp

OFFICIALS from the Department of Public Health and the Ministry of Health and Sports provided healthcare services yesterday morning for displaced Hindus in the IDP camp at the Danya Watti playground in Sittway Township.

Most of the patients in the IDP camps were treated for seasonal flu, coughing, nasal congestion, skin diseases, in-

juries and diarrhea. No infectious diseases were found, according to Dr Htain Lin Aung from the Department of Public Health.

Dr Htain Lin Aung was one of four health professionals (the others were three nurses from the Department of Public Health) who provided medical care for 55 Hindus yesterday. — Win Min Soe (IPRD) ■



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye, centre right, meets with ambassadors from the US, Denmark and the UK, at left, at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. **PHOTO: MNA**

## Union Minister receives US, Denmark and UK ambassadors to Myanmar for Rakhine project

Dr Win Myat Aye Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement received H.E. Mr. Scot Marciel, United States Ambassador to Myanmar, H.E. Mr. Peter Lysholt Hansen Ambassador of Denmark to Myanmar and H.E. Mr. Andrew Patrick, British Ambassador to Myanmar at the Makhalar Hall of the ministry yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they discussed the development

of Myanmar endeavoured by Myanmar's new government elected by the people, the obligations of UEHRD, which invites public cooperation, the committees which were formed for Rakhine State's affairs and their relating works, the humanitarian aid in provision with raised momentum, the core purpose of UEHRD, humanitarian aid plans, and the implementation processes of the obligations in cooperation

with related ministries.

Rehabilitative works initialised by choosing places and priority works, making people understand and accept diversity by holding a Diversity Management Forum, implementation works for the recommendations of Dr Kofi Annan and offering scholarships by international societies for the development of Rakhine State were also discussed. —Myanmar News Agency ■

## May all live in peace in harmony and understanding forever!

Khin Maung Oo

CRITICS of Myanmar concerning the affairs in the Rakhine State are saying that any social community has a right to name themselves as desired. Although individuals have may choose their own names, a social community needs the unanimous consent of other communities of the country when that particular community claims to be one of the indigenous ethnic races. In this case, it should be reiterated that to be able to put forth a credible claim as one of the ethnic races of Myanmar, irrefutable evidence is needed such as historical facts, anthropological evidence, archeological evidence, a distinct language what would stand the test of linguistic analysis (such as vocabulary, morphology, sentence structure, grammar and phonetics) and most important of all, that particular community should be able to prove beyond a doubt that they are different and distinct from

citizens of Bangladesh. On top of all this, this particular community should be willing and able to live in peaceful co-existence with the rest of the other national ethnic races, particularly the Rakhine ethnic race. They should have the desire to integrate as peaceful resident of the Union of Myanmar. We have no reason to believe that any country in the world would accept immigrants (legal or otherwise) who wish to impose their culture and religion on the natural citizens of the host country.

Some people of Bengali extraction in Rakhine State are claiming for the right to be accepted as one of the national ethnic races under a strange name which is loathed by all citizens of Myanmar including all the national ethnic races. Although they might have lived in Myanmar for 100 years, the Bengalis who settled here from across the border are guests only. A guest has no right to demand any of the rights enjoyed by the natural born citizens of

Myanmar. The Union Government and the people have agreed to grant citizenship rights to the guests in accordance with the citizenship laws of the State.

As for Bengalis who will come into Rakhine State and the existing Bengalis, they all need to decide over their future with prudent consideration. Provided that they decide to co-exist together with other ethnic national races, living in weal or woe, there is a chance that they would be accepted to live in Myanmar in accordance with the laws of the country. They will never get unanimous consent and hospitality of local nationals if they stubbornly claim that they have the right to choose any name they desire without being able to prove that they are indeed one of the national ethnic races. Taking into consideration that there are over 160 million Bengalis on the other side of Rakhine State border line, it must be acknowledged that Rakhine nationals will have a great concern over

the likelihood of losing their own national characteristics. Though being guests, if they have an attitude of living as they wish to live without paying attention to the host, it will be completely contrary to deterrent principles of shame and fear which guard the world from falling into chaos.

The attitude that there must be a special zone for Bengalis in Rakhine State under the protection of an international police force is a flagrant violation of the national sovereignty of Myanmar. Myanmar would never accept such an arrangement. We do not think that any race of nation would ever accept such a demand. No race or nation in the world would ever accept such a demand. Last but not least, Bengalis in Rakhine State must live in peaceful co-existence with Rakhine nationals and other ethnic national, sharing weal or woes, without being influenced by external instigations or propaganda. May all live in peace, in harmony and understanding. ■

## Terrifying new elephant poaching epidemic to meet demand for 'health' jewellery made from their skin

Warren Manger

MYANMAR'S elephants, whose numbers are already declining due in part to being poached for their ivory tusks, now face an additional threat that experts say could hasten their extinction.

The majestic animals are now in demand for their thick hide, which is made into popular jewellery that allegedly wards off illness. Record numbers of Asian elephants are now being killed not for their tusks, but for their skin, which is polished and made into blood-red bead bracelets and necklaces.

Demand for the illegal jewellery is already so high in China that dealers are ordering more and more elephant skin from smugglers.

Last year, rangers found more than 60 elephants butchered for skin in Myanmar,



The skin is polished and made into blood-red beads, which are sold as bracelets and necklaces at up to £75 each. **PHOTO: WWF**



A slain elephant stripped of its skin was the victim of a new epidemic threatening Asian elephants in Myanmar which are already endangered. **PHOTO: WWF**

which has now become the epicentre of this poaching epidemic.

This year has been worse, experts said. Investigators seized 66 trunks in a single haul. Two herds were slaughtered, with a further six skinned elephants found in six weeks in the summer. If demand for beads continues to grow at this rate, these already endangered animals could be poached to the brink of extinction within two years.

Christy Williams, WWF's Myanmar director, said: "This is the last chance for Myanmar's elephants. Poaching and skinning is at unprecedented levels. If it continues, it could lead to the extinction of wild elephants here."

Just 20 years ago Myanmar's lush

forests were seen as a safe haven for Asian elephants, but the rise in poaching in its largely lawless countryside has decimated the 10,000-strong population.

Just last week, the UK's Environment Secretary Michael Gove announced plans to ban all ivory sales in Britain, in an attempt to help save elephants across the globe. But rising demand for the jewellery made from their skin has only intensified the killing of Asia's elephants.

Monica Wrobel, head of conservation at wildlife charity Elephant Family, said of a recent, grisly discovery of dead elephant carcasses in the middle of a forest: "These elephants were killed to order. The herd were tracked, slaughtered, and every bit of skin taken."

The bracelets and necklaces made from the elephant's skin is sold for up to US\$100 each. Meanwhile, experts fear fewer than 1,400 wild elephants remain here. Experts say the spike in demand for skin could see them disappear from much of Myanmar by 2019. Tuskless mothers and calves were previously immune to ivory poaching but are now targets, preventing the species from reproducing and replenishing itself.

And with poachers using poisoned darts to protect the skin, the animals face a cruel death. Mr Williams said: "It can take up to three days for an elephant to die. As the poison slowly takes effect, the elephants wander in terrible pain."

"As someone who has seen many elephant deaths, even I am shocked by the brutality of these skin poachers."

In the past, Chinese medicine used elephant skin to ease stomach pains and in a paste for arthritic joints and diseased skin.

But until now, medics generally used skin from animals that villagers had encountered by chance and killed to eat.

That changed in 2014, when elephant beads were first spotted in markets on either side of Myanmar's border with China. It coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of butchered carcasses found, with only the animals' skin taken. Ms. Wrobel said: "It seems the beads are jewellery, but these traders start by asking what your ailment is. Then they will say, 'Well, these beads are perfect for that'. They're deliberately trying to create a new market for poached animals."

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