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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, left, greets Nai Htaw Mon, Chairman of the New Mon State Party, in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

New Mon State Party, Lahu Democratic Union agree to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

TWO more armed ethnic groups agreed yesterday to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), bringing the total number of signatories to 10 and allowing them to participate in

the upcoming 21st Century Panglong-Union Peace Conference.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received delegations from the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Dem-

ocratic Union (LDU), both of whom agreed to sign the NCA, at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The delegation from the

New Mon State Party was led by its Chairman Nai Htaw Mon, and the delegation from the Lahu Democratic Union was led by its Chairman Kya Khun Sar.

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Ready to begin repatriation: Government

MYANMAR is ready to launch the repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh despite a delay announced by Bangladesh authorities.

Under the agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh, repatriation was slated to begin yesterday.

"We are ready to accept the first batch of returnees today as agreed, because under the agree-

ment with Bangladesh, we must start the repatriation within two months and today is the day we slated to launch the repatriation," said Dr. Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement at the press conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Myanmar has prepared two reception camps on its side of the border to take back up to 300 people per day.

"I want to reiterate that we are ready to accept the returnees from Bangladesh according to the list we sent to Bangladesh. To carry that out, we need international cooperation," said U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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'BEST BANK IN MYANMAR'

Awarded by FinanceAsia 2017

Advisory Board for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State, Committee for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State hold meeting

THE advisory board for the implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, former deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Thailand, and the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye, met in the meeting hall of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

The meeting was attended by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ye Aung, U Kyaw Tint Swe, U Thaung Tun, U Win Khaing, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi and U Kyaw Tin; Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Than Htut, secretary of the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State; Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, joint secretary of the committee; Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) in Rakhine Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet; and members, permanent secretaries, directors general, managing directors and officials of the committee.

At the meeting, Union



First meeting of the Advisory Board and the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Minister for Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe said the stability, peace and development in Rakhine State depends not only on the people of Myanmar but the entire human society, especially the two societies in Rakhine State. With regard to the events in Rakhine State, the country had formed an inquiry commission, led by Vice President U Myint Swe, and an advisory commission on Rakhine State, led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

In addition to this, a committee for the implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Dr. Win Myat Aye, was also formed. Suggestions and support of the advisory board for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State are also welcome, said the union minister.

Next, Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, leader of the advisory board, said the members of the advisory board included people from the political and

economic sectors. The advice and experiences of the advisory board will be provided to the committee. This will be an opportunity to exchange experiences on Rakhine State events, and the advisory board will be able to work together with the committee, said the leader.

Further, Dr. Win Myat Aye, chairman of the committee, explained about the committee's works and the UEHRD in Rakhine. Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet explained about

humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State, the resettlement works and the development project committee.

The advisory board and the committee then discussed the status of implementing recommendations on Rakhine State.

Later in the evening, the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State hosted a dinner for the advisory board in M Gallery Hotel, Nay Pyi Taw.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Ready to begin repatriation: Gov't

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"We have heard the news that the Bangladesh side is not ready. As we have not received any official word, we contacted the Bangladeshi Embassy in Yangon and they said they have many steps to be taken," U Kyaw Tin, Minister of International Cooperation, told reporters in Nay Pyi Taw.

Under the Physical Arrangement for Repatriation signed by the two sides in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 January, Myanmar would will receive verified returnees at Taung Pyo Letwe and Nga Khu Ya reception centres, while adding Hla Pho Kaung as a transit camp for the returnees.

"We will increase the number of returnees depending on the situation. We will review the repatriation process within three months," said U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Gov-

ernment.

Asked about coordination between the two governments, Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye said Myanmar will carry on the repatriation process after seeking agreement with Bangladesh when the neighbouring country offers coordination.

"The governments of the two countries are trying to solve this issue, but some are trying to complicate this issue so that they can get international attention," said Union Minister U Kyaw Tin.

He also said that Myanmar sent forms to be filled out by returnees with the help of UNHCR and Bangladesh signed an agreement with UNHCR to carry out the repatriation process on their side and they need to take time to carry out several steps on the ground.

Asked if a time limit is set

for the repatriation, Dr. Win Myat Aye said the government is fully carrying out repatriation efforts and were ready to receive the returnees as of Tuesday.

"The repatriation is targeted to be accomplished within two years, or, it can finish before the two-year time frame, or it can take longer than the set time," said Dr. Win Myat Aye.

Regarding access to Rakhine State by reporters, Union Minister U Thaung Tun said journalists would get freedom of access to information, but safety is considered first in conflict areas and authorities are managing the situation there so as not to create unnecessary problems.

Seventeen journalists will soon go to Rakhine State along with the Rakhine Advisory Board, he added.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint receives Singapore's Ambassador to Myanmar Ms Vanessa Chan in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Dr. Pe Myint receives Singapore Ambassador and experts from French Communications

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint separately received Singapore Ambassador to Myanmar Ms Vanessa Chan and experts from French Communications, Ms Florence Bonetti and Mr SPHenri Clelorme, at the Ministry of Information guest hall yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting with Ms Vanessa Chan, Dr. Pe Myint discussed matters related to library works conducted in the two countries, the upgrade of libraries in

Myanmar to community centres and community libraries, Singapore's solution to preventing the spread of hate speech on social media and the status of media works in the two countries.

At the meeting with the two experts from French Communications, ways to engage in effective public relations were discussed.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and other officials also attended the meeting.—MNA ■