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Schoolchildren take part in the first tsunami preparedness drill at Basic Education High School 1 in Kungyangon yesterday. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Children hold Tsunami Drill

SCHOOL CHILDREN participated in the first tsunami simulation exercise at Basic Education High School No. 1 in Kungyangon yesterday. A second tsunami exercise will be carried out at Basic Educa-

tion High School in Letkokkon at 2p.m.

These drills are being organised as part of a government of Japan-supported regional project to strengthen the tsunami preparedness

of schools in 18 Asia-Pacific countries, which is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In Myanmar, the project is supported by the Relief and

Resettlement Department, operating under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement; the Ministry of Education; and NGO Seeds Asia, which is supporting UNDP in the implementation.—GNLM ■

AHA Centre inspects repatriation offices

THE ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) has handed over a collective donation of humanitarian aid to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

The donation included US\$450,000 worth of basic necessities from ASEAN countries and \$75,000 worth of kitchen appliances from Singapore. Both donations were made on 14 November, 2017.

The aid is being distributed among Sittway, Buthidaung and Maungtaung townships in Rakhine State by the local government.

Three members from the AHA Centre's Emergency Response and Assessment Team travelled to Ngakuya Relocation Camp and Hla Phoe Khaung transit centre on 27 and 28 January. The team inspected the technological support and distribution of humanitarian aid in the camp. The visit from the AHA Centre shows the unity of the ASEAN countries and creates awareness about Rakhine State's rehabilitation process in neighbouring countries. — Myanmar News Agency



'BANK OF THE YEAR IN MYANMAR 2017'

Awarded by Financial Times (The Banker)

Free medical treatment to be provided to 3,000 people in Buthidaung

A mobile medical team of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) has provided free healthcare to local people in Buthidaung, Rakhine State.

The team comprising nearly 20 specialists, including surgeons, obstetricians, gynaecologists and orthopaedics, as well as paediatricians, physicians and nurses, began their first mission at Buthidaung Township Hospital yesterday.

The mobile medical team will also tour other areas in Rakhine State to give medical care to the local people.

"We have provided medical treatment to the local people without discrimination," said Dr Win Sithu, chairman of the med-

ical team.

Before giving medical check-ups to outpatients, the team checked the patients at the township hospital yesterday.

According to Dr Win Sithu, two patients needed urgent operations. During its two-day programme, the team will provide medical care to more than 3,000 patients. The Rakhine State Cabinet and Health Department jointly conducted the free medical care programme.

"As healthcare service is essential, our Rakhine State Cabinet has assisted doctors, physicians and professors from Yangon," said Dr Chan Tha.

The government has also arranged accommodation for patients who come from other areas. —Aung Ye Twin/ Ko Min ■



People receive medical check-ups provided by nurses in Buthidaung. PHOTO: AUNG MIN

Seminar on entrance exams held in Maungtau



Faculty members meeting with schoolchildren in Maungtau. PHOTO: AUNG MIN

A SEMINAR was held at B.E.H.S No. (2) in Maungtau Township to discuss ways to raise the number of qualified applicants for the 2018 entrance exams.

Dr Chan Tha, Rakhine State Minister for Social Welfare, said the State Counsellor had suggested holding the seminar, and inviting teachers and professors from Sittway University. The purpose of the seminar is to provide information on raising the percentage of people passing the entrance exam, as Rakhine State has the lowest pass percentage.

Dr Chan Tha said that when the State Counsellor arrived in Maungtau District, she found the standards of education were pretty low, and in fact, Rakhine State scored a pass percentage of

only 17.14 per cent in the entrance exam qualifications in the whole country last year.

Dr. Chan Tha said workshops were also held to reform the education system, as well as the essay reading ability of the students. He said the professors visited the rural areas and spoke to teachers, educators, parents and students to give them an idea of how to move forward with the entrance exams.

During the seminar, eight professors, lecturers and assistant lecturers explained the subjects appearing in the entrance exams to the students in attendance. Dr. Chan Tha said similar seminars were also held in Sittway, Minbya and MraukU. —Aung Ye Thwin, Ko Min

Estimated US\$ 2 million worth of drugs seized

SECURITY personnel arrested four suspects along with 19,500 stimulant tablets from a row boat near Maungni Village, Maungtau Township in the Naf River on 26 January.

Similarly, an anti-drug

squad raided the house of a suspected drug smuggler in Maungni Village, Myoma Kanyintan village-tract in Maungtau Township. The force found two suspects in the house and confiscated

1,285,750 stimulant pills from a trawler.

The suspects have been charged with the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Construction ministry to build RC box culverts on Chauk-Singu-Bagan Road

THE MINISTRY of Construction is currently implementing a project to build reinforced concrete (RC) box culverts near Gangaw Village, Nyaung U Township, Mandalay Region.

The box culverts, which are bridge-like structures, will allow cars, motorbikes and pedestrian traffic to cross over the waterway, while allowing adequate passage for the water.

Funded by the Mandalay Region government, the projects were initiated on 1 December over the two creeks near Gangaw Village to resolve the transport problem for travellers using the Chauk-Singu-Bagan Road, which is prone to frequent flooding.

The government has allocated more than Ks590 million for the project from its budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal year.



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

The Road Department under the Ministry of Construction and the tender-winning Hi-Tech Land Co have implemented the project, which is now 35 per cent complete, and is expected to be finalised by

the end of March.

Concerted efforts have been made by project implementers to complete projects within the set time frame.—Ye Win Naing (NyaungU) ■

“There’s been no trace of threats. The villagers I’ve met did not seem to have any fear so that’s what we saw.” : H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai

ADVISORY Board for Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State led by H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai was formed on 14 December, 2017. The committee met with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice President U Myint Swe, members of the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State and visited Maungtau and Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State.

H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai gave an inclusive interview to journalists on 25th January.

Following is the interview with H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai.

First of all, the advisory board, ten of us, the international advisors and Myanmar advisors got together and had a full board meeting for the first time on the 22nd.

We’ve had 3 board meetings in the past two weeks and looked at our terms of reference. We talked about our modus operandi and exchanged views of the general situation in Rakhine State.

Yesterday we visited several villages in Rakhine State and we saw villages that were burnt down and villages that were left empty. We also saw preparations for the returnees. I’ve been given the opportunity to talk to the local people; the Buddhists and Muslim, and the Hindus. I’ve inspected the houses being built to accommodate the people who were supposedly returning on the 23rd of January but that did not happen. But preparation has been underway and we saw the transit camps. Security has been provided. There’s been no trace of threats. The villagers I’ve met did not seem to have any fear so that’s what we saw.

I think the advisory board hasn’t given any advice yet. We will monitor the situation and have deliberations among ourselves in the days and months to come. I think in two, three months the advisory board will be able to come up with preliminary recommendations as to what else the implementation committee should do and what should be the priorities. We also need to install trust building mechanisms in the villages otherwise the implementations done there will not be sustainable.

We commend the Myanmar government in committing to



H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai meets people from Muslim Community during his visit to Maungtau. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

implement the 88 points recommended by the Kofi Anan’s recommendations. The State Counsellor has emphasized on the rule of law and providing justice to the people in the local communities. I think that is the right way to go.

What I’ve seen from the helicopter is that Rakhine State has a very rich, fertile, agricultural ground and they have plenty of water so there is much potential there. There is much potential for income creation and job creation to train farmers on how they can have better productivity and how they can put more value added into their productions. I can see opportunities for microenterprises and job creations for women, especially in the garment industry.

On the way to Kyaukpyu there is a great opportunity for this special economic zone and there’s great opportunity for tourism in Thandwe. So I think that the idea of the State Counsellor that peace and development have to work hand in hand and the establishment of a Union Enterprise to create a public-private partnership is a good one. I can see a lot of opportunities there after I inspected on the ground myself and after talking to the people.

I think in some way the first trip to Myanmar has been very fruitful and constructive. We have seen what has been developed and we have seen the traces of violence and we have heard how the Myanmar government has endeavored to provide a lot of security.

We have seen the step by step preparation of accepting the returnees. The papers have been sent to the Bangladeshi side; they have even prepared a biometric registration for the returnees. I



H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai.

hope the repatriation will take place sometime soon. I hope the international community can be helpful and can understand the local constraints. The international community cannot be helpful if it’s not inclusive.

That’s my reflection of the impression I’ve had on this first trip. The advisory board will have a collective deliberation. We will speak with one voice and our mandate is to give advice to the implementation committee headed by the Minister for Social Welfare. So we expect to come up with recommendations and advice in the next 2-3 months.

Well I have seen the Chinese assistance for the building materials for the offices of the immigration, foreign ministry and security including part of the housing so I think that is to be commended. I think China can play a key role in helping with the repatriation in providing the housing materials to be built and I understand China has been working closely with the Union Enterprise on this.

I think what the returnees need most of all is security. We have seen security provided in 4, 5 villages that we have visited.

Secondly, the returnees will need a proper place to live and there should be full medical facilities adequately for them to stay

temporarily then to be resettled in the villages they are from.

They have given us the evidence of the preparations for food to be provided, electricity in the transit camps, health services and things like that. I also inspected the storage for food and how it could be transported. The place was already provided with electricity by the Myanmar government. I encourage the Myanmar government to continue to provide this kind of media access. I think we’ve had about 20 of us altogether seeing this with our own eyes.

I just like to say one thing if I may. You’ve probably heard the news that former Governor Bill Richardson is no longer with the advisory board. We came with open minds and we speak with one voice to the implementation committee so we should have given ourselves the chance and opportunity to listen to the policymakers, to the officials, to the villagers, to everyone involved in the problem of Rakhine State and the concerted effort to bring peace and development to the area.

Unfortunately, Governor Richardson might have come with the preconceived notion of wanting to do something; that is the release of the Reuters reporters. He did not raise that in the advisory board at all but he raised it with the State Counsellor. It is not in the mandate of the advisory board. The board was not consulted formerly in the meeting that we had three times.

My personal view is that if it was in the early stage of the persons being arrested then maybe we can do something about it. But the process has gone to the point where the public prosecutor has persecuted and filed a case

to court. So I think everyone has to respect the rule of law and I think the State Counsellor has emphasized that whoever they are, everyone is under the same law.

So the advisory board is not in the position and will not like to do pressuring any government or interfering with their criminal justice procedure. The only thing we could do and we did it already; I did it on a personal basis; I raised the issue with Union Minister U Thaung Tun before and he has ensured us that the treatment of the Reuters reporters would be in accordance with the due process of law and proper criminal justice procedure. We have no intention to pressure the government to release anyone or any intention to interfere in the court procedures.

Secondly, I would like to inform the press that I think it’s not fair that Governor Richardson said to the international media that the advisory board would be whitewashing or would be representing or protecting the Myanmar government. We don’t intend to be the cheerleader of the government or the lead cheerleader of the international community. We are not the mouthpiece of the Myanmar government or the international community. We are independent, impartial and you have seen that the international advisors and Myanmar advisors are people of great dignity. We have our credibility and a lot of social capital and we have been working in the area of peace and development for a long, long time.

My personal view is that the local government has to be more involved. I think the process has to be more inclusive and I would urge the local parliamentarians in Rakhine State to be consultants. I think the entire consultation process has to begin from the community level before going all the way up to the National Government level.

The implementation of Kofi Anan’s 88 points cannot be done top-down only or bottom-up only; it has to be under the process of constant consultation from the communities to the executive branch and the legislative branch of the State and National government. Of course, the international community can be included in the consultation process and I think that’s how the peace, development and harmony can be sustainable.—Myanmar News Agency ■