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SUNDAY SPECIAL



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Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than arrives Hsihseng of Pa'O Self-Administered Zone to open a dam. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker opens water supply facility in Hsihseng, Pa'O Self-Administered Zone

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than attended the opening ceremony for a potable water distribution project for six wards in Hsihseng Town, Pa'O Self-Administered Zone and the neighbouring villages of Phaya Phyu, Haw Taung, Haw Myauk, Panline, Wah Taw, and Ta Khawt Tan.

The ceremony also marked

the start of construction work on a dam, which was conducted on the afternoon of 3 March. The works are part of the Shan State (South) region development project being carried out by the Ministry of Border Affairs, Border Areas and National Races Development Department and a Japanese non-government organisation, the Terra

People Association (TPA), under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed earlier.

The ceremony was opened by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than by cutting the ceremonial ribbon, after which the Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung delivered a speech. Shan State Chief Minister Dr. Lin Htut, Sec-

ond Secretary Mr. Keita Iwase from the Myanmar Economic and Development Assistance Section of the Japanese Embassy, along with Pa'O Self-Administered Zone Chairman Khun San Lwin then delivered speeches, while TPA Project Manager Shibata explained about the financial assistance provided.

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Myanmar-Bangladesh battalion commander level meeting held Friday

THE Myanmar-Bangladesh battalion commander level meeting was held in Ghumdhum Border Observation Post (BOP) at border post 31/1 in Bangladesh on 2 March.

Matters relating to people remaining illegally near the border, arrangements for joint patrols, and exchanging news and information on occurrences along the border on a real-time basis were discussed during the meeting.

The meeting was attended by a 9-member team led by Police Lt-Col Saw Zayar Lin of No. 1 Border Guard Police and a 6-member team led by Lt-Col Monzurul Hassan Khan, Commanding Officer of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) battalion 34.

Regarding the meeting, Presidential Office spokesperson Director General U Zaw Htay said, "Yesterday afternoon, a battalion commander level meeting was held.

The border is normal. There were no special incidents to report today. About 1,000 people remain at the border."

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New Rakhine Hluttaw building opened

A CEREMONY to open a new Rakhine Hluttaw building was held yesterday morning.

State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, State Hluttaw Speaker U San Kyaw Hla and State High Court Chief Judge U Kyauk opened the new Hluttaw building by cutting a ceremonial ribbon. Next, Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung unveiled the Hluttaw sign board. Afterwards, State Hluttaw Speaker U San Kyaw Hla and Deputy Speaker U Mya Than presented commemorative gifts on the opening of the new Hluttaw to Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, the State Chief Minister, state ministers and departmental heads. This was followed by State Chief Min-

ister and State Hluttaw Speaker planting a Eugenia tree in the lawn of the new building, along with the taking of commemorative photos.

The Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, State Chief Minister, State Hluttaw Speaker, State High Court Chief Judge and officials toured the Hluttaw affairs committees' offices and the Hluttaw hall, while officials explained about the building and offices.

The opening ceremony was attended by Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, State Chief Minister, state Hluttaw Speaker, State High Court Chief Judge, State Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, State ministers, State Advocate,



Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu and officials cut ribbon to open the new Rakhine Hluttaw building yesterday. **PHOTO: WIN MIN SOE (IPRD)**

State Auditor, regional command headquarter (Sittway) regional commander, Pyithu Hluttaw,

Amyotha Hluttaw and State Hluttaw representatives, departmental officials, town elders, rep-

resentatives from civil society groups, news media and invited guests.—Tin Tun (IPRD) ■

Union Minister for SWRR Dr. Win Myat Aye visits Thailand

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (SWRR) Dr. Win Myat Aye, who was in Bangkok on an official visit at the invitation of Thailand's Social Development and Human Security Minister General Anantaporn Kanjanarat, met with the host minister on the morning of 2 March.

During the meeting, matters relating to friendly and close cooperation among ASEAN countries were discussed. Also, there was agreement to remain focused on cooperation in the human security and social protection areas, jointly conducted under bilateral agreements. There was also a commitment to continuing bilateral cooperation works on economic development among countries in the ASEAN region, along with social protection matters, as well as the process and arrangement of protection and care provided for people. There was, further, a discussion of the difficulties faced in the actual practice of offering assistance to vulnerable people in Thailand, the status of increased job opportunities in the private sector after setting up economic strategies for handicapped persons, rebuilding the lives of trafficked persons and achieving success in the matter of migrant workers through bilateral diplomatic relations and cooperation.

Afterwards, the Union Minister observed the work conduct-



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye looks at the process of weaving fabrics using traditional looms in Bangkok, Thailand yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

ed in the central management department of the ministry using IT systems and a hotline to provide one stop service for nationals of Thailand, working both in the country and abroad, when they need emergency and social assistance. The Union Minister also observed the products produced by training schools and care centers under the ministry.

Later in the afternoon, the Union Minister visited a care center in Nonthaburi Province for trafficked people from Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar,

and observed the status of rescue and systematic protection, reintegration with families and rehabilitation works, and then discussed bilateral cooperation and difficulties that need to be resolved. On the morning of 3 March, the Union Minister left Bangkok for Chiang Rai by air and studied the Chiang Rai-based Mae Fah Luang Foundation that is providing sustainable development for legal works in the border area. The Union Minister was greeted by Mae Fah Luang Foundation founder Mr. Khun Chai

and officials who explained the foundation's aim, the support provided by the Thai Royal Family and the government, the changing views of the people who are facing economic difficulties from deforestation and opium planting, difficulties faced in performing people-based transformational works, international studies conducted, help provided to farmers to replace opium growing, as well as support provided, and to be provided in the future, to Myanmar's government ministries. The Union Minister, in return,

explained about the incumbent government's social protection and people centered works, conducted to seek socio-economic development.

Also discussed was the status of implementing socio-economic development, in conjunction with implementation of peace, as well as conducting short, mid and long term projects and providing humanitarian assistances, the rehabilitation of drug addicts and the status of coordinating and resolving differences. The Union Minister also reviewed and exchanged views on cooperation that is to be continued.

The Union Minister further discussed increasing the development of social protection programs implemented for the people, studied the strength and weakness of government and all strata of those people participating in development works conducted in Thailand. The group also reviewed the conducting of vocational training courses at displaced persons camps along the Myanmar-Thai border and discussed the possibility of rehabilitating ethnic nationals who want to reintegrate back into Myanmar. The Union Minister also studied the successful works performed by the Doi Tung Project for coffee and macadamia production, as well as working with traditional looms, paper, porcelain and earthenware works.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Rakhine issue is not a religious one but a political and economic challenge involving migration, competition over limited resources, poverty and rule of law

Union Minister for International Cooperation participated at the High-Level Segment of the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva.

THE Myanmar delegation led by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation arrived back Yangon on 3 March after attending the High-Level Segment of the 37th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council held from 26 to 28 February 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland.

At the High-Level Segment of the Human Rights Council held on 27 February, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivered a Statement apprising the meeting of the complexities of Myanmar's democratic transition and the situation in Rakhine State. In his statement, the Union Minister mentioned that despite many daunting challenges facing Myanmar, the international community focused most on the situation in Rakhine State, as the media incessantly portrays it as a religious issue. In fact, the Rakhine issue is not a religious one but a political and economic challenge involving migration, competition over limited resources, poverty and rule of law. But it has recently evolved from the communal conflict into the issues of national security and terrorism. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has taken immediate proactive steps including setting up of Dr. Kofi Annan Advisory Commission to resolve the complex issue of Rakhine State soon after taking office. The government's efforts are gaining momentum with the international community responding positively when the armed attacks against three police outposts occurred in early October 2016 and changed the situation completely. Again on 25 August 2017, within hours after the release of the final report of Dr. Kofi Annan Advisory Commission, the so-called "ARSA" launched orchestrated attacks on 30 police outposts and the



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivers the speech at the High-Level Segment of the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva. **PHOTO: MNA**

Regimental Headquarters leaving multiple deaths and injuries on security personnel and civilians. The security forces have no choice but to suppress terrorism and to restore law and order and protect the innocents. Muslim population in affected areas of Rakhine State crossed the border out of fear of conflict and violence. However, many Muslim villages remained intact. Little is known on reported in the media about many people of Daingnet, Mro, the Mramagyi and Rakhine minority groups and Hindus who have had to flee their homes as a result of violence. Instigation, threats and false hopes given by ARSA also play a role in the mass displacement of people. As the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported, ARSA attacks were intended as a provocation. It was those terrorist attacks that triggered humanitarian crisis. Yet, many conveniently failed to denounce provocative attacks. Any form of terrorist act for whatever cause should not be condoned.

The Union Minister added that as Myanmar government is giving priority for the repatriation of the displaced people, significant progress has been made in the preparation pro-

cess. Humanitarian assistance has been provided to all affected communities through Red Cross Movement and ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster

Little is known on reported in the media about many people of Daingnet, Mro, the Mramagyi and Rakhine minority groups and Hindus who have had to flee their homes as a result of violence.

Management (AHA Center). FAO and WFP have also joined in this effort. The government is making progress in implementing the recommendations of Dr. Kofi Annan Commission as a road map, the Ministerial Committee assigned to this task has recently issued its first progress report to the public. With a view to granting more access, Myanmar

government has organized day-trips to Rakhine State in three groups for all diplomatic corps including UN agencies to see for themselves the ground situation and its readiness for repatriation. Myanmar government recently invited UNHCR and UNDP to jointly assist the Government's efforts in carrying out livelihood development for all communities in Rakhine State and for repatriation and resettlement of the displaced persons respectively.

The Union Minister then stressed that in suppressing the terrorists who used civilian recruits, it might cause collateral damage and civilian casualties. With regard to alleged human rights violations, the government shall never condone impunity and action will be taken against any perpetrators in accordance with the law if there is concrete evidence. Myanmar strongly objects the use of such words as ethnic cleansing and genocide in reference to the situation in Rakhine State. Myanmar would welcome the international community to play a constructive role in relation to Rakhine State and sought their understanding on the complexity and their support for the government efforts in finding a durable solution. Taking non-constructive measures would be counterproductive, as it will further polarize the communities and undermining the efforts for the long-term objective of reconciliation. The Union Minister concluded by stressing that Myanmar is facing the most challenging time in its history of transition, but the government will turn the challenges into opportunities for national reconciliation and peace leading to further strengthening democracy and expressed its belief that the

success of democratic transition will overcome these challenges.

While in Geneva on 26th February, the Union Minister also attended the High-Level Segment of the Committee on Disarmament and delivered a statement sharing Myanmar's views on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. On 27th February, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin, accompanied by Permanent Representative to the UN / Ambassador U Htin Lynn, met with Mr. Manabu Horii, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK at the United Nations separately. During the meetings, the Union Minister explained the government's efforts to resolve the situation in Rakhine State.

The Union Minister also held a meeting with Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), and exchanged views on strengthening of ICRC's assistance on Myanmar government's humanitarian efforts. On 28 February, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin and Mr. Johannes Matyassy Assistant Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation held the 2nd Meeting of Myanmar-Switzerland Foreign Office Consultations in Bern. During the meeting, matters pertaining to the bilateral, political and economic cooperation, promotion of cooperation projects under the new cooperation strategy of Switzerland on Myanmar (2019-2023), Switzerland's enhanced engagement with ASEAN as well as providing humanitarian assistance and repatriation and development in Rakhine State. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Myanmar-Bangladesh battalion ...

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"We were ready to receive the returnees since 23 January. During a visit to Bangladesh from 15 to 17 January by a Myanmar delegation led by Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, the Bangladesh side had provided a list of more than 8,000 people from 1,600 households who will be sent back, as a first batch.

However, the list is not according to our format and our immigration department is converting the list into our format. As promised, we were ready to receive the returnees since 23 January" said U Zaw Htay. As per the bilateral agreement, Myanmar had kept in readiness the Taung Pyo Letwe and Nga Khu Ya Reception Centres, as well as the Hla Pho

Khaung Transit Centre, since 23 January. Arrangements for the board and lodging, water, electricity and health care requirements of the returnees were also made. Diplomats, United Nations organization officials, local and foreign reporters, members of the Committee for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State and the British Foreign Secretary had also visited and reviewed the arrangements.— Myanmar News Agency ■

