

State Counsellor, EU Special Rep discuss promotion of human rights, Rakhine issue

State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received European Union Special Representative for Human Rights H.E Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis who is going to attend the 4th Myanmar-EU Human Rights Dialogue in Myanmar, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on matters pertaining to the further co-

operation between Myanmar and the European Union on protection and promotion of Human Rights, and situation in Rakhine State, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting was also attended by Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, the Director-General of the Political Department U Soe Han and other officials.— Myanmar News Agency ■



The State Counsellor in a meeting with EU Special Representative Mr. Lambrinidis before the latter's attendance of the 4th Myanmar-EU Human Rights Dialogue on the same day. **PHOTO: MNA**

Myanmar-Bangladesh commence joint patrol

Myanmar's Border Guard Police and Bangladesh's Border Guard Bangladesh have reportedly performed 14 joint patrols around border checkpoints 42 and 55 from 4 to 26 February.

The Myanmar Police Force has announced that these joint patrols have effectively pre-

vented terrorist activities along the border, illegal immigration and illegal trading. It also said the relations between the two countries' border police have improved, leading to the timely exchange of information and successful upkeep of the rule of law.—Myanmar News Agency ■

National committee on minimum wage approves Ks4,800 ...

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At the meeting, the employers mentioned their difficulties such as insufficient electric power, payment for absence without leave and overtime payment. Meanwhile, the labourers raised their voices on the possible problems with the fixed minimum wage.

"Earlier, there were cases where the employers did not offer a daily wage of Ks3,600 even when the national committee on minimum wage had set it at Ks3,600. To avoid such cases, the related committee needs to be in touch with the labourers to inspect if they receive the actual minimum wage of Ks4,800, and if the employers are cutting other allowances which were previously being given," said Daw Khaing Zar Aung.

Although several employers and labourers were dissatisfied with the previous minimum wage of Ks3,600, the government convinced them to accept it.

Union Minister U Thein

Swe said at a regular meeting between Vice President and businessmen that this proposed rate was based on the commodity price, exchange rate, gross domestic product and inflation, along with wages set in neighbouring countries. They heard the employers and employees from regions and states. "We do not want to hurt anyone through this proposed rate. Based on the 2015 minimum wage calculating method, the rate is determined in line with the current exchange rate," he said.

The national committee on minimum wage will continue to submit it to the cabinet.

After the proposed minimum wage is approved, the workers will be paid at the set rate. The new, inexperienced workers will be paid not less than 50 per cent of the minimum wages during the three-month training period (before probation period). During the three-month probation period, the labourers will receive 75 per cent of the minimum wages. ■

Yangon government to use parking fees to solve traffic woes

The Yangon Region government will use overnight and hourly parking fees to tackle traffic congestion in Yangon.

The region's government has been using various approaches to handle the traffic problem in Yangon, and it now

plans to fund its solution with parking fees and other taxes.

The government will impose parking fees on cars according to standard rates and will build new parking spaces and expand the road with the fees collected.

Meanwhile, the Yangon Region government will also take action against drivers who violate traffic rules, as well as control and restrict taxis registered outside Yangon from operating in the municipal areas.—GNLM ■

Fourth Myanmar-EU Human Rights Dialogue held



Myanmar and the European Union, co-chaired by U Kyaw Tin and Mr. Lambrinidis respectively, discussed on numerous human rights topics, such as Rakhine State's situation, and the UN's cooperation. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Fourth Myanmar-EU Human Rights Dialogue was held at the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw, on 5 March 2018.

The dialogue was co-chaired by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation, and Stavros Lambrinidis, European Union (EU) special representative for human rights.

The dialogue was attended by senior officials from the ministries concerned, Kristian

Schmidt, ambassador of the delegation of the European Union to Myanmar, senior officials of the EU and diplomats from some EU member states stationed in Yangon.

During the dialogue, the participants exchanged their views on a wide range of human rights issues related to labour rights, the situation in Rakhine State, freedom of expression, access to basic social service, gender issues, human trafficking and related

exploitation, protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and combating and prevention of religious intolerance and incitement to hatred, human rights cooperation in the United Nations, and Myanmar's accession to and the implementation of international human rights conventions and treaties, as well as the rights of refugees and migrants and national minorities in EU member states.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Preparation for matriculation exam in Rakhine State

Matriculation examinations will be held from 7 to 16 March and 122 examination centers have been opened in Rakhine State where more than forty thousand students will sit in the examination.

Following are the voices of the Rakhine State government and related departments on the preparations made for the examination.

Security

Rakhine State Police Force is conducting four types of security operations. Those are the security during the transport of question papers and answer papers from and to Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon. Safe keeping of the

question and answer papers in the vaults of the police stations. During the examination period, the security of the exam centers is also provided. The aim is to prevent dangers such as fire and act of violence. More than 1,700 police personnel are being deployed for security. Patrols, security posts and checks will be conducted before and during the examination period of 7 to 16 March. Loudspeakers and making of noises are prohibited and no stage shows, music bands and dances are permitted as it could distract the students sitting for the exam said Police Colonel Aung Myat Moe of Rakhine State Police Force.

Health care

In each examination center, a medical team is assigned for health care.

They will provide the necessary health care throughout the entire examination period. Ambulances will also be in readiness so that a quick transfer to a hospital can be conducted where the sick student can continue to sit for the examination while being provided with health care.

All hospitals in the state have a room ready for such incidents said the state head of public health care Dr. Kyi Lwin.

Electricity distribution

Preparations are made so that there is no black out dur-



Rakhine State Electric Power Enterprise has arranged to prevent outage during the examination period. **PHOTO: TIN TUN (IPRD)**

ing the examination period. All exam centers could not be provided with stand-by generators but stand-by generators were deployed in places where there can most likely be black-outs but

everything that can be done to prevent black-outs have been done said State Chief Engineer of electricity U Kyi Zeya. —Tin Tun (IPRD), Han Lin Naing (Sittway) ■

River bank protection in Mandalay Region expected to finish next April



Deforestation and soil degradation is blamed for changing the flow of the Ayeyawady River and for erosion of the river's bank. **PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG**

THE Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems under the Ministry of Transport and Communications is carrying out river bank protection tasks along the Ayeyawady River in Mandalay Region.

The river bank protection tasks are being undertaken in Amarapura, Madaya, Singu, Nganzun, Myingyan, TadaU and NyaungU townships by spending Ks. 41.87 billion and the whole project is expected to be fully completed in April. "We have been able to begin the pro-

ject in January because we solved financial and technical problems very quickly. The whole project is slated for completion next month," said U Toe Aung Lin, a director from the department.

The nineteen river bank protection projects are being executed in the current fiscal year with the allotted funds from Mandalay Regional government. Some projects are about 50 per cent finished and some projects are nearly 25 per cent complete.

"The river bank protection task is beneficial to

the local people because it can prevent the farmlands, homes and pagodas from river bank erosion. Our department also focuses on not only river bank protection but also river bank stabilization. We carry out the tasks in cooperation with local lawmakers and people," he added.

Deforestation, soil degradation, illegal gold mining at watershed areas, climate change and rapid rise in river water levels can cause river bank erosion.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House) ■

Man arrested for raping four-year-old

A four-year-old girl was allegedly raped somewhere between Pan Hlaing Railway Station and Kyimyindine Railway Station in Sanchaung Township on Friday, according to a complaint filed by the victim's father at Sanchaung Myoma police station.

According to the victim's father, the girl and her two siblings were sleeping under the crossover bridge near Pan Hlaing Railway Station last Friday night. The father and mother left the children for the night and returned early next morning only to find the four-year-old girl missing. While searching for her, they found out that the local ward administrator had sent an unidentified girl with injuries to Yangon

General Hospital. On arriving at the hospital, the parents were able to locate their daughter. She had sustained injuries to her private parts. After confirming that the girl had been raped, the father filed a report with the Sanchaung Myoma police. After an investigation, Ko Ko Naing, alias Ko Naing, alias Naing Gyi, was arrested the following evening from Payarlan Railway Station, Pabedan Township, along with aphrodisiacs in his possession.

The police will take further action against the suspect Ko Ko Naing, who has served jail time twice — a seven-day sentence in Yangon and a one-year sentence in Hlegu Township. —Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations meet

A meeting between the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations on implementing the suggestions accepted by Myanmar during the second round regular Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the human rights situation of the countries of the world was held on 5 March 2018 at the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission office.

The meeting was attended by the chairman and members of the Myanmar National Hu-

man Rights Commission and representatives of civil society organizations.

At the meeting the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Chairman delivered an opening speech and commission member U Nyunt Swe explained briefly about UPR and the suggestions accepted by Myanmar. Afterwards representatives of civil society organizations participated in the discussion. —Myanmar National Human Rights Commission ■

Boosting Myanmar's Fishery Sector for Exports

MYANMAR is endowed with vast fishery resources in its coastal waters, rivers and inland lakes. Myanmar's re-emergence in the world of commerce offers exciting opportunities to address the issues of sustainability and conservation, as well as to boost its export potential.

According to data provided by the Department of Fishery (Yangon region), the country has earned US\$535 million through the export of marine products in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

In the latest report of the Department of Fishery, the export of marine products reached \$535 million, registering an increase of more than \$97 million compared with last year, through the export of 38,000 tonnes of products. The export value is expected to reach up to \$700 million in the remaining three months of the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Fishery exports are expected to generate some \$1 billion in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, if the government and businesses cooperate to increase productivity, as well as the product quality.

All possible ways and means should be used to increase the productivity of value-added fishery products, such as local dried fish businesses, and encourage the establishment of canneries and fish-ball factories across the nation.

fish-ball factories across the nation. It can help Myanmar achieve the desired export earnings from marine products. The fishery sector is important for the social and economic development of the country, as fish is consumed by the population at most meals.

Currently, the Department of Fishery provides the necessary assistance and technology that can bolster the export volume of the country. Moreover, a law or a bylaw is needed to tackle the land problems faced by fish and prawn farmers.

The Department of Fishery is producing fish and shrimps in more than 400,000 acres of ponds across the country. With the aim of producing enough for the consumers and increasing exports, the Department of Fishery is supporting the livestock sector by providing technology, investments and other equipment to fish and shrimp breeders, in cooperation with the Myanmar Fisheries Federation Association. ■

The 1980 Border Agreement and the Boundary Line at Western Gate of Myanmar

By Shin Min

UNDESIRABLE events and issues cropping up each day at the Western Gate of Myanmar in the Rakhine State could be termed as motley assortments of disagreeable occurrences. In the aftermath of deadly terrorist attacks on 25th August 2017, agreed plans are being set to move ahead such as that of Myanmar for the peaceful acceptance of the returnees and that of the Bangladeshi side to repatriate people back to Myanmar; however, an unexpected and unwanted problem emerges at the area of boundary line between the two countries. Predicament of six thousand people staying on the dot of Myanmar soil and territory has jumped up prompting to find solution.

Boundary Line between the two countries

The land space between boundary pillar number (34) and (35) in the midst of the border line of Myanmar-Bangladesh demarcation and the Myanmar boundary fence has started to group up with a few number of people and multiplied to six thousand in a short time, creating a disturbing and worrying scenario. The officials from two sides met and discussed on the issue and reached an agreement. The people on the land space at boundary line have been transferred to Kutupalong Camp and Balukhali Camp in Bangladesh, leaving only one thousand people on the land, it is learnt.

In this upsetting situation, problematic terms of reference have popped up. In the sensitive and susceptible area around the boundary line between the two

countries, the land space where no person is being allowed to stay, dwell or remain has been wrongly referred and quote as "No Man's Land" and the "Zero Line".

Sovereign State

If one asked, whether the term of reference is vital, and then the answer is very important. Union of Myanmar is a sovereign nation. A sovereign nation has the characteristics and uniqueness of the boundary demarcation, the territorial integrity, the population and the government. The boundary demarcation and definition of a nation is very much vital for its sovereignty. Therefore, the term of reference with regards to the boundary is to be accurate and precise. In the course of diplomatic relations over the international affairs, especially at the time of negotiations on bilateral relations between Myanmar and Bangladesh, more caution and prudence is to be advocated and endorsed. It should never ever be taken up lightly without due consideration.

In fact, "No Man's Land" is a term being defined as an area of land between the borders of two countries or between two armies that is not controlled by either side, and allowed no one to stay or remain.

Myanmar has signed agreements with the neighboring countries on boundary line demarcation mentioning the distances of both countries where no one is being allowed to dwell or remain as well as banned and barred from construction of buildings. The purpose of the agreement on the "Non-Construction Zone" is to avoid the possible dent and disorder of connectivity of boundary line markers. Moreover, if any discrepancy and disparity occurs

on the territorial issue, then the boundary demarcation line could be easily traced back.

Myanmar is being accorded with the agreement from Bangladesh that no building is to be constructed within 150 feet from boundary line. Therefore, no one is being allowed to construct structure in that zonal area of 150 feet from boundary line. The agreement has been exclusively included the boundary program agreement and cooperation plan signed between the two governments on 19 December 1980.

In Quest of solution

At the moment, the land space under referral between the boundary pillar number (34) and (35) in the midst of Myanmar-Bangladesh Boundary line and the parameter fencing of Myanmar is the territorial land of Myanmar. It is absolutely and completely not the "No Man's Land" as there was no such agreement whatsoever. Therefore, the "Non-Construction Zone" is never to be referred as "No Man's Land". In order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, the land space should be termed as "Non-Construction Zone" of "Boundary Demarcation Line".

In this regard, the English edition of the agreement has used the term "Boundary Line". In some international context, "Zero Line" is being referred. In line with the existing Myanmar-Bangladesh Boundary Agreement, it is to be noted that the term under referral must be used "Boundary Line".

If and when the situation calls for face-to-face negotiations in quest of solution between the two countries, the aspiration and desire of each citizen is to be well prepared on the side of the country. At this juncture, the issue between the two countries is being handled and sorted out bilaterally, but under the sharp eyes of the international onlookers. It is therefore, the government and the people must be cohesive, integrated and unified.

Constant vigilance needed

It is possible that there might be some terrorists among those remaining at the boundary line, and the disturbing news creeps in that some terror organizations gave directives to hold on tight

and stay there if the Myanmar side asked them to leave the land space. Moreover, the spreading of wrong information and fake news are mounting to reap political advantage to an alarming extent. Fake news such as that of life threatening situation is present inside Myanmar; that of extreme food shortages in the country, and that of other fabricated news are the whispering campaign of the so-called rights activists burning like wild fire.

Amicable result

At this juncture, the two governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh must always cooperate in finding a better solution and agreeable result. Therefore, the two governments are negotiating and discussing.

The first meeting of the repatriation plan for the persons who left Rakhine State is being discussed among the repatriation Joint Working Group between the two countries on 15 January and signed an agreement on 16. On 23 November 2017, an arrangement was being signed at the ministerial level between Myanmar and Bangladesh. In the initial stage, prescribed forms for verification by Myanmar authorities were in the process for those who fled to Bangladesh after the terrorist attacks on 9 October 2016 and 25 August 2017. Firstly, complete forms with regards to (508) persons with Hindu faith and (750) persons with Muslim faith were being handed over to the Bangladeshi Foreign Secretary by Myanmar side, according to the official release after the meeting of two countries.

Furthermore, a list unveiling over 1000 ARSA terrorists has been entrusted into the hands of Bangladeshi side by Myanmar officials, it was learnt

Forms required to be revised

During February 2018, a Myanmar delegation led by Home Affairs Union Minister Lieutenant General Kyaw Swe paid an official visit to Bangladesh, where they have received a list from Bangladeshi side mentioning 8000 returnees for repatriation as first batch. Unfortunately, it was found that the prescribed forms being filled up for necessary verification were not in conformity with the forms

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provided by the Myanmar side. Therefore, to ensure the working plan fine and smooth, the forms were being revised and amended by the officials of Immigration and National Registration Department accordingly, it was learnt.

On 2 March 2018, Myanmar-Bangladesh battalion commander-level of two countries met and discussed over the schedules and plans for border patrolling and for the exchange of security information. 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.

On 23 January 2018, the sectoral plans on repatriation tasks on the Myanmar side have been briefed and clarified by the responsible officials to the media personnel that started the same day. In other words, Myanmar side made the point clear that it has been doing what was earlier discussed and agreed between the two sides.

At this juncture, the relevant information is presented with regards to the resettlement and the development tasks being implementing in Rakhine State. In Rakhine State, certain committees are being formed for pragmatic approach namely Implementation Committee on recommendations of Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, (Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine-UEHRD). Moreover, the State Counsellor and the high ranking officials have been meeting with high dignitaries of international organizations, where the guests are being clarified with ground reality over the Rakhine

episodes and incidents. Furthermore, the diplomats and envoys, the international organizations, and the local and foreign media have already been permitted to see and witness by themselves and comprehend well at the two repatriation camps and the interim acceptance camp in Myanmar.

In the aftermath of 2016 October incident, the local and foreign media have been allowed and permitted to have access on news for eight times in Maungdaw area and IDP camps in Rakhine State, it was learnt. In providing more accurate and authentic information in Maungdaw District area, easily accessible Mayu FM Radio Program airwaves via the languages of Bamar, Rakhine and Bengali have been transmitting six times a day.

Implementing with high observant

In wrapping up the aim and purpose of this article, it is to convey, inform and pass on the fact on one hand over the development tasks for Rakhine State currently going on, and on the other hand, that the existing challenges and complexities are being resolving with high perception. In the course of problem solving, even the simple casual talk and the highly worded term of reference are to be selected with wisdom, not to lead them into wrong notion.

The author of this article wishes to submit the esteemed readers that it is my privilege and honor to share that Myanmar side is implementing in good faith on the Rakhine situation for the safety at the western gate of our beloved country with high perception to avoid unnecessary and undesirable disadvantages. ■

Translated by UMT

Modern zoos serving as Noah's arc for saving endangered species around the planet

By Saikat Kumar Basu

THE perennial question that still revolves around the concept of zoos or zoological garden is whether it is moral and acceptable for humans to confine animals in cages for entertainment or education or awareness or captive breeding. Several respected and dedicated animal right activists around the planet have been demanding complete closure of zoos; and to set the animals back into their natural ecosystem and habitats or advocating for more progressive animal rights. On one end of this spectrum are conservationists, foresters, and ecologists who sincerely believe that zoos have an important role to play in educating the public and making them aware of the spectacular biodiversity of the plant so that the public become more caring and responsible towards conserving natural ecosystems and environment.

While the other extreme ends calls for freedom for animals and advocating for the animals to live and thrive in their own natural ecosystems and habitats; free from any confinement or cage or enclosure. They insist that no matter how progressive and animal friendly modern zoos are in their basic philosophies; and no matter how great the zoo infrastructure is for mimicking natural ecosystems; they can never be equal or anywhere near the quality of wild natural habitats. Hence any confinement in the zoos actually violates the right of a helpless and defenseless animal as an individual species co-inhabiting the planet with us; and must be returned to the wild. The debate will continue as is expected in any democratic society; however, honestly speaking we could not possibly undermine the role of modern zoos in education and awareness of the public. Furthermore, we also can not under estimate the need for modern zoo facilities for the purpose of multiplication through captive breeding of several endangered species for the purpose of conservation as well as restoration of degraded natural habitats and ecosystems.

Traditional or conventional zoos have travelled a long distance over time in transforming into knowledge centers for animal health, nutrition, behavior and conservation. They have been serving as interpretation centers for better understanding of the delicate human-animal interactions and contributed greatly in the species conservation program through captive breeding around the planet. All these could not be achieved by releasing confined animals overnight into the wild. Furthermore, many zoo bred animals are completely cut off from their wild instincts and habitats for generations; and may not even be able to adapt to their natural ecosystems; and even die, thereby further compromising their dwindling numbers.

The knowledge gathered in the zoos and aquariums by dedicated keepers, curators, vets, breeders, ecologists, conservators and researchers over several centuries across different generations in closely studying wild animals like mammals, birds, reptiles and fishes could be actually used in saving them in the wild. To be successful in proper conservation of a species that is threatened or endangered or critically endangered in the wild; we need to know about them in detail. Zoos provide some if not all opportunities to know them intimately. That knowledge could be applied in saving the species in their wild habitats and ecosystems. Hence undermining the value of modern zoos for their role as Noah's arc for saving endangered species around the planet is not advisable and appreciable. ■



Photo credit-R. Ray