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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Union official: the real Rakhine

Union officials explain cause for exodus, ARSA threats, repatriation obstruction

A press conference on developments in Rakhine State including an update on the repatriation effort and clarifications on illegal settlements on the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In opening address at the press conference, U Aung Hla Tun, the Deputy Minister for Information, said the major reasons for the mass exodus of mostly Muslim residents of northern Rakhine State to Bangladesh were fear of arrest, and also threats from the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which attacked border guard outposts in August 2016, sparking a military response. ARSA has been termed a terrorist organisation.

"According to information from reliable sources on the ground, most of these people fled in panic just after the military operation following the terrorist attacks, for fear of being arrested for their involvement or on suspicion. The second reason was threats by ARSA and its supporters. The third reason was many of them were persuaded to flee by the expectations such as chances of resettlement in a third country or better livelihood in the camps in Bangladesh", said U Aung Hla Tun. Since that time, officials said, concerted efforts at repatriation have been made by Myanmar, but delays have occurred due to documentation and misinformation, U Aung Hla Tun said.

The press conference on developments in Rakhine is convened at the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

> Myanmar has been ready to receive verified returnees from Bangladesh.

Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe and Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali signed an agreement in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 November, 2017 that allowed repatriation of displaced residents who could produce proof of residency in Myanmar.

"So far as I understand, 'proof of residency ' is very liberal. It can be citizenship identity cards, national registration cards, temporary registration cards, business ownership documents, school attendance certificate as well as the name of the village, etc.", Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun said.

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KBZ BANK
STRENGTH OF MYANMAR
'BANK OF THE YEAR IN MYANMAR 2017'
Awarded by Financial Times (The Banker)

Union officials explain cause for exodus, ARSA threats, repatriation obstruction

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"In the middle of February, Bangladesh government sent back over 8,000 forms to us. However, the forms were lacking essential information and all important requirements for biometric verifications. We are doing our best to make this process a success and we sincerely hope Bangladesh government will reciprocate in the same manner."

U Aung Hla Tun added that discussions are ongoing with the UNHCR and UNDP for their involvement in assisting the government in the repatriation process.

U Myint Thu, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Myanmar has been ready to receive verified returnees from Bangladesh.

U Myint Thu said there have been problems involving prospective returnees and the people illegally living on the border between the two countries. "We have explained intensively to those people that they cannot lawfully occupy and inhabit the area between the boundary line and the 150 feet from it. We also told them that in line with the physical arrangements, Myanmar will repatriate them after verification process. At that time, they said that they would abide by the laws and wanted to return to the places of origin. While Myanmar authorities decide to address their reasonable concerns, they came back with demands with pre-conditions", U Myint Thu said.

"We must stress here that the area occupied by them, under Border Treaty and Law, cannot be inhabited by anyone. More importantly, it will be extremely dangerous as this area is bound to become a foothold of ARSA terrorist", he said.

There are many areas where the international community can play a constructive role in the endeavours in Rakhine State, U Myint Thu said.

"We call for a constructive approach and understanding on the complexity of the challenges in Rakhine State. We also seek support from the international community to help our efforts in finding a durable solution.

The international community can best help us by understanding the prevailing situation and supporting the long-term reconciliation and sustained socio-economic development in Rakhine State", he said.

As part of that effort, Myanmar authorities met with the UNHCR Representative and UN Resident Coordinator in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 February.

The agreement signed on 23 November 2017 between Myanmar and Bangladesh states that "the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar agree that the services of the UNHCR could be drawn upon as needed and at the appropriate time".

"We consider that the appropriate time is now to invite the UNHCR and UNDP to get involved in the repatriation and resettlement process of displaced persons as well as in carrying out livelihood development for all communities in Rakhine State", U Myint Thu said.

Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Chief Coordinator of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Aid, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State, reiterated the readiness for repatriation with providing human rights, diversities, tolerance and security for them, adding the UEHRD has built reception centres and accommodation for the returnees.

UEHRD is also working for creating economic opportunities for returnees while working for effective humanitarian aid, holding negotiation for resettlement and for development socio economy and long-lasting peace there.

In the Q and A session, Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun said I would like to request the international media that our country was in successful democratic transition because of the help of the international media. That's why in the future, I would like to request the international media to support our democratization process and the development of our country.

Asked which charges were filed against detainees in Maungtaw, Police Adjutant-General Police Brig-Gen Win Tun said out of 384 detainees, 248 have been charged under the anti-terrorism law and five are under the arm law. Some were facing for two to three charges.

Regarding the question on some media reports talking about the repatriation that the Myanmar Government verified already that there are 300 persons will the government soon announce that they can go back to the Myanmar side, Director-General U Htay Hlaing of the Immigration Department, replied that the Bangladesh Government had returned forms to us, not the same type we gave them, back in February. It was for 1,673 households consisting of 8,032 people. Up till yesterday, we have verified 93 households consisting of 456 people and we discovered three people with connections to terrorist activities.

Regarding the question on the three hundred people coming back and arrangement for them and when they are coming back, the Director-General replied that as we've mentioned before, the Bangladesh side gave us forms that did not have fingerprints or mention of former residences or individual photos, they simply give us the family photo so we cannot easily verify them. The Bangladesh side has said they will report back using the forms that both sides have agreed to use, so I hope that answers your question.

We've already sent to the Bangladesh side that these 374 are verified and they can immediately start their repatriation at their own convenience, he added.

Regarding the question on how the government will provide security and safety for returnees who tell the media that they are not willing to go back because they are afraid, U Myint Thu replied that actually they are not refusing to return due to fear. There are high expectations that have lured them into that and there also expectations from ARSA and their supporters. Concerning their security, we have done all we can but we are alone are not responsible to take care of their security.

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U Myint Thu, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, talks to media at the news conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Chief Coordinator of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Aid, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State.

Sint Sint Aung from Nippon TV.

Htet Naing Zaw from the Irrawaddy.

Yuichi from the Nikkei.

UMFCCI, Switzerland delegation discuss IP law at Economic Dialogue

SWISS businessmen have emphasised on the formulation of an intellectual property (IP) law at the Myanmar-Switzerland Economic Dialogue, which was held last Tuesday at the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

The dialogue was held with a view to promote foreign investment and trade, according to an announcement made by UMFCCI.

An IP law plays a crucial role in attracting Swiss companies to invest in Myanmar, said Marc Engelhard, Southeast Asia country manager of Economiesuisse, a Swiss corporate union.

Some 25 companies are working in Myanmar, and more are interested in making investments, said Livia Leu, Switzerland's Ambassador to Myanmar.

These companies are waiting for the development of an IP law, Engelhard maintained.

Officials from UMFCCI explained the drafting of the IP law and other legislations, in cooperation with the government and private sectors.

If Swiss companies invest in Myanmar, the country will get technology-sharing opportunities besides jobs, said U Thaung Tin, Vice President of UMFCCI.

Myanmar businessmen and the Swiss delegation, led by the Switzerland ambassador, discussed matters concerning industrial manufacturing, electricity and power, insurance, food production and healthcare services.

Additionally, they also discussed the signing of the Bilateral Investment Treaty.

This dialogue is the third meeting between Myanmar and Switzerland in five years.

Bilateral trade between Myanmar and Switzerland in the first nine months of this fiscal year was worth US$14 million. —GNLM

Water supply projects to increase YCDC's capacity to 300 million gallons

WITH the completion of two water supply projects, the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) will be able to supply more than 300 million gallons of water in the region.

The Kokkowa river water pumping project is expected to be completed by 2024, and the La Gun Pyin water supply project will be completed in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, said U Myo Thein, deputy chief of Water and Sanitation Department of YCDC.

"We are implementing these projects to supply sufficient water to the Yangon Region. Also, we are surveying fresh water sources in and around Yangon Region," he added.

The La Gun Pyin water supply project will be able to supply more than 40 million gallons daily to South Dagon, North Dagon, East Dagon, Dagon Seikkan townships, Dawbon and Thilawa Special Economic Zone. Also, the Kokkowa river water pumping project will be able to supply 60 million gallons of water daily to Hlinethaya township, as well as six other townships, such as Ahlon, Kyimyindine, Sanchaung, Kamayut, Bahan, Dagon and Mingalar Taung nyunt.—GNLM

Union officials explain cause for exodus, ARSA threats, repatriation obstruction

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Because it is ARSA who tried to interrupt the process by setting off explosions like landmines while we were starting our repatriation process.

Regarding the questions on responsibility to be taken by the government, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun said I don't think the international media did enough to make our correct narrative known. Instead of blaming the international media, I'd rather say our media wasn't strong enough to make the proper narrative among the international community.

Chief Coordinator of the UEHRD Dr Aung Tun Thet said there are two things. For security what we can guarantee is that anyone who comes back will have a secure an environment as anywhere else in the country. It's always the perception and therefore when you asked the second question about the narrative, I think there is a three part narrative in this sequence of events.

The first part is the insurrection or the attacks on the outpost by the extremists. The second part of the narrative is the response from the armed forces. The third part is the actions taken after this for resettlement, repatriation, reconciliation, harmony and peace. What is very tragic is that although there is a three part narrative, in the international media you only hear of the second part; the part where the armed forces' response as disproportionate and as robust, these are the acquisitions made. But if you want the whole narrative then I hope emphasis

Khin Yadana from Myanma Alinn daily.

Nyan Hlaing Lynn from Frontier Myanmar.

The journalist from the NewYork Times.

> 'We consider that the appropriate time is now to invite the UNHCR and UNDP to get involved in the repatriation and resettlement process'

is given to all the three parts. We are not saying ignore the second part, we are saying please put into consideration the first part which is equally very important for us, as well as the third part where we want to reestablish harmony and reconciliation between the two communities.

So I implore the media to get the whole narrative rather than cherry picking and choosing those that are very sensational and can be put in headlines but please try to put in more balanced views and that is all we can hope and that is the purpose of this press conference.

Regarding a question on the government's response to rumors of malnutrition of children being linked to slow ethnic cleansing, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Health and Sports Prof. Dr. Thet Khaing Win said that the accusations on Muslim children lacked sound data and the ministry is conducting nutritional statistics survey and micro nutrient survey for children in the whole nation. He said that Rakhine State is not the only area with low nutrition levels for children.

He said they have been giving prioritized nutrition programs to Rakhine State such as supplying food with help from the World Food Programme (WFP), supplementary programs, vitamin programs, and micro-nutrient programs. He also said that malnutrition is caused by contagious diseases, infestations, and infections which would be the responsibility of the concerned military to provide vaccinations for. He said all the ministries concerned are working together to address this situation and they are also providing surveys for the returnees.

Regarding the question on the government's response to western media labeling the Rakhine situation as ethnic cleansing and genocide, Dr. Aung Tun Thet stated there is no ethnic cleansing and it is a serious accusation.

Also present at the press conference were permanent secretaries and heads of departments of the ministries, diplomats and local and foreign journalists.—Myanmar News Agency *(Full Text of the speeches delivered by Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and Permanent Secretary U Min Thu are available at www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com)*

15 MARCH 2018
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

History, not the UN, will be final judge on Rakhine

THE terrorist attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in Rakhine State in August 2017 abruptly changed the state of affairs in northern Rakhine and made restoration of law and order a priority, which led to the displacement of people internally in Rakhine State and across the border.

Since then, there have been misleading, presumptuous and uninformed accusations against Myanmar.

The latest of these accusations is that authorities were bulldozing the ground to build military installations on sites that once were the homes of members of the Muslim community in northern Rakhine.

In reality, the authorities are preparing to construct new structures for returnees as part of the repatriation process.

"What the government does should not be viewed with a preconceived mind and doubtful eyes", U Htin Lynn, the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN in Geneva, told the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council currently meeting in Geneva.

Instead of criticism, the Permanent Representative said he hoped for support.

> History, not the United Nations, will be the ultimate judge of what has occurred in Rakhine State.

"Myanmar hopes that the international community will constructively contribute to our efforts to advance the democratization process and promote and protect human rights in line with the country's circumstances and needs", U Htin Lynn said.

The passage of time may be the only way to cut through the rancor and clear the fog of misinformation surrounding the real truth behind what is happening in northern Rakhine.

History, not the United Nations, will be the ultimate judge of what has occurred in Rakhine State.

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 undermine the efforts for the long-term objective of reconciliation.

Many ethnic groups, including Rakhine, Daing-net, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and those belonging to Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu faiths have remained in their villages, as witnessed by members of the diplomatic corps and UN agencies their recent visits.

It is unreasonable to assert that the Myanmar leadership, whose mission has human rights at its core, remains indifferent to the allegations of grave human rights violations. The leadership and the government shall never tolerate such crimes. Myanmar is ready to take action when there is clear evidence.

Myanmar is facing the most challenging time in its history of transition, but the Union Government will turn these challenges into opportunities for national reconciliation and peace leading to further strengthening of democracy. The Myanmar government has expressed its belief that the success of democratic transition will overcome these challenges.

Glorious Mogok City to celebrate Festival of Founding 800th Anniversary

By Maung Tha (Archaeology)

Mogok is a city in the Pyin Oo Lwin District of the Mandalay Region and located 22.92 latitude and 96.51 longitudes and situated at elevation 1162 meters above sea level. Mogok is also renowned as a Ruby Land of Myanmar and is a home to Myanmar, Shan, Palaung, Lisu, Chin, Kokant, Gurkhas Pa-O and other ethnic races.

Mogok History

According to the records, Gemstone trading has been documented by Western travellers in Mogok since the 16th century A.D. But it is believed that gemstone production and trade began earlier, around 6th century AD.

In 1597, King Nuha-Thura Maha Dhama-Yaza annexed the Mogok and Kyatpyin regions as a way gaining direct access to rubies and other gemstones. Up to the 19th century the mines were under the control of Myanmar Kings.

Nga Mauk, an enormous ruby with great color

According to the historical records, an enormous ruby with great color and clarity was discovered in Mogok by a villager named Nga Mauk, who the ruby was eventually named for. The ruby had a total weight of around 80 carats and was presented to the King.

Unfortunately, the Nga Mauk ruby disappeared without a trace after the annexation of Myanmar by the British in 1885.

At that time, Upper Myanmar was took control of the Mogok Stone Tract region and the mines were leased to a British firm (Burma Ruby Mines Ltd.) from 1889 to 1931.

Geology of Gemstone Deposits in Mogok

Mogok stone consists primarily of high-grade metamorphic schists and gneisses; granite intrusive, including gem-bearing pegmatites; peridot-bearing ultramafic rocks; sapphire-bearing syenite and skarn; and ruby- and spinel-bearing metamorphic marble.

At present, it is roughly estimated that there are 1000-1200 gemstone mining operations in the Mogok Stone Tract. These ranges from individual artisanal miners, to cooperatives, independent miners, semi-mechanized operations to large-scale mining companies working with modern excavators, drill-blasting and exploration techniques.

Traditional mining techniques include twin-lon, lebin, hmyadwin and lud-win. Lud-win, for example, involves recovering gem-bearing byon from karstic limestone caves and fissures which can be sources of rich concentrations of gemstones. Today, on primary host rock and opencast mining of secondary deposits are the most commonly encountered methods.

History of Ruby Land

Authour U Thein Lwin outlines the history of the founding of Mogok in his book titled 'Padamyar Myay (Ruby Land)' in details.

The story goes that three lost hunters discovered rubies at the base of a collapsed mountain in 1217. The hunters returned to their hometown of Momeik with the red-meat coloured gems and offered them to the saopha who then ordered his guards to set up a village on the site of modern-day Mogok.

Mogok is believed to have been built almost 800 years that different ethnic groups have lived in the area peacefully. Besides ethnic culture, there are also their customs, food, flowers and plants which will become the tourist destination of the region.

According to the Myanmar Encyclopedia, it is believed that Mogok rubies have been used in royal jewelry for over 1000 years. But much like the whereabouts of said royal jewels, concrete evidence to corroborate a change in the timeline of the first discovery of gems at Mogok is scarce.

Livelihood of Locals

The livelihood of local residents mainly depends on the mining, trading, cutting and polishing of gemstones-works. Other remarkable feature of the city is the Htar Pwe Gem Market in which sellers from Mogok and nearby towns gather to sell rough gemstones.

The Land of Ruby

Mogok is renowned in the world as 'the Land of Ruby' and located 200 km north of Mandalay in Myanmar. Moreover Mogok has a fairly temperate climate year-round is situated in a valley and surrounded by a large number of mountains which are situated in a valley surrounded by a large number of mountains.

Mogok has been famous since ancient times for its gemstones, especially ruby and sapphire, but semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli, garnet, moonstone, peridot and chrysoberyl are also found. The gems are found in alluvial marble gravels by means of panning, tunneling and digging pits by hand. The gravels derive from the metamorphosed limestones (marbles) of the Mogok metamorphic belt.

Mogok, the original source of ruby

According to the report, 90% of rubies come from Mogok and only in terms of quality Mogok rubies are best compared to other places. The red stones from there are prized for their purity and hue. The mountainous Mogok area is noted as the original source of ruby including the world's finest "pigeon's blood" rubies and the world's most beautiful sapphires in "royal" blue.

Mogok is well-known as the 'ruby land' due to higher quality rubies and other gems such as sapphires, garnet and moonstones. It is believed that the gems trading in Mogok has been dated at 800 years old.

Grand Festival of Founding Mogok

The grand festival to mark the 800th anniversary of founding 'the land of Mogok city' is under preparations.

The festival will be held with the aims of promoting the market of Gems and Jewellery as well as tourism industries of the city, maintaining traditions and culture of the region, and informing the history of Mogok city and creating more job employment opportunities for the local people.

The Mogok 800th anniversary is planned to be held for 3 days from March 29th to 31st at Mhone Kwin, Mogok City. This festival is not merely just for fun but to promote tourism and trading.

Many preparatory and organizing committees for the founding of Mogok City 800th anniversary are being formed across the country including Yangon, Mandalay and Mogok respectively.

Moreover the Tourism Federation, Myanmar Gems and Jewelry Entrepreneurs Association, charity groups and artists will join the meetings which can be able to celebrate the festival on a grand scale.

With the agreement of the members, the committee decided to use 60% of the fund for the festival and the remaining 40% for the community centre to help Mogok residents.

Mogok is the heart of one of the world's foremost ruby and gem mining areas and there are hundreds of working mines scattered around the regions.

Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung

Six Leading Myanmar Businesses Invite Collaboration on Gender Equality on International Women's Day

Six leading Myanmar companies came together to affirm their commitment to achieving equality in their workplaces.

FMI, City Mart, KBZ Group, Parami Energy, Aya Bank and Shwe Taung Group have formed a new coalition to push for women's empowerment in the workplace, saying women's equal economic participation is key to Myanmar's economy.

As a way of acknowledging International Women's Day on 8th March, the Business Coalition for Gender Equality (BCGE), in conjunction with the Australia-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce, hosted a cocktail evening which shone the spotlight on workplace gender equality.

The inaugural Chairwomen of the Coalition is Daw Zarchi Tin, Non- Executive Director of Yoma Bank, Director of Strategic Development at First Myanmar Investment Co., Ltd, and a mentor for Myanmar Women's Mentoring Network.

Daw Zarchi Tin said "Although it could be said that I have enough on my plate, when presented with the opportunity to be involved in this initiative, I accepted because I really believe the issue of gender equality affects all of us – and that business, along with government and civil society, has a key role to play in reducing inequalities, tackling poverty, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

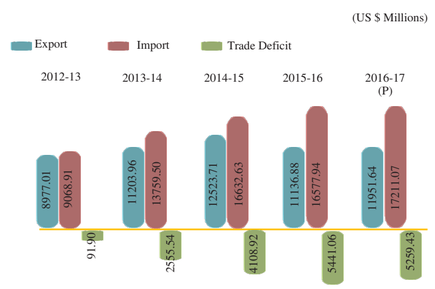
"With good champions, business leaders with passion, the sharing of best practices and working in partnership with government, civil society and many others, I know we will gather momentum and make an impact".

The Coalition is being formed with the support of the Australian Government's Investing in Women initiative. Australia's Ambassador to Myanmar, His Excellency Mr. Nicholas Coppel, attended BCGE's International Women's Day event.

"The Australian government has been very supportive of this initiative. The Coalition very much appreciates that, and we look forward to a strong collaboration moving forward," Daw Zarchi Tin said.

"Forming the Business Coalition for Gender Equality is only the first step," she said. "We look forward to many more dynamic, forward thinking businesses joining the business coalition and working alongside us to advance gender equality in Myanmar".—GNLM

VALUE OF FOREIGN TRADE IN MYANMAR



Source: Customs Department
Information Unit: Central Statistical Organization