

Our visit to DP camp is to explain about our readiness for repatriation: Dr. Win Myat Aye

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye led a delegation to Bangladesh to visit the Ukha camps of displaced persons in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, and met Bangladesh's Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Home Affairs during his three-day visit.

The following are some excerpts from interviews with Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye and Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Chief Coordinator of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance and Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State — UEHRD

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye

Some people at the displaced persons' camp can speak Myanmar, and so we were able to talk freely. The government is duty-bound to accept the displaced persons, and we will perform our duties and proceed according to the bilateral agreements. It is important for the DPs to know the process thoroughly. So, we explained to them the procedures when we met them.

They also mentioned their troubles and desires. What we learnt is that the majority of them are willing to return to their homes in Myanmar. For this, they should ask authorities in Bangladesh to fill up the requisite forms. However, they have not seen the forms or received them so far. According to the bilateral agreements, Bangladesh must distribute the forms to those who want to return to Myanmar.

The entire process is being carried out according to the rules and regulations.

First, we will scrutinize the lists of the returnees to ensure no terror suspects are among them. After a careful scrutiny, we will send the lists of returnees to the Bangladesh side. Unfortunately, the displaced persons staying at the camps have no knowledge of the details. We explained to them about the procedures in detail. Some people got a chance to express their desires. As such, we are performing our duties according to the rules, so that they can enjoy



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye meets with displaced persons at the Ukha displaced persons' camp in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong. PHOTO: MNA

the rights they deserve.

We explained about the repatriation process for DPs and the relocation and resettlement programmes, including better provisions for them in the administrative laws. We explained it is the duty of the governments to ensure they can live in better conditions, according to the law.

We have made available a few facilities for individuals to better their living conditions.

We haven't had a chance to see them all in one place because these camps are situated in vast areas. We had requested the Bangladesh authorities to meet some 508 Hindus and some 750 Muslims separately, but to no avail. We have scrutinised some 600 people among the 8,000 people in the lists provided by Bangladesh.

It is a great opportunity to meet the displaced persons at the DP camps, because they can share information among themselves. Moreover, we can determine why the process of repatriation had not been initiated by Bangladesh yet.

Success

Another good point is that

we had spoken openly about the repatriation process with the Bangladeshi Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Home Affairs. During the meeting, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister said they would send information about the DPs using the forms agreed upon by both countries as soon as possible, and would collaborate with Myanmar to handle the sensitive border area issues. The meeting was very good indeed and we practically got some results, which can bring about success through cooperation.

In short, the purpose of our tour in Bangladesh was to meet displaced persons directly in order to know their requirements and explain our readiness for the repatriation process from Myanmar's side. We did well.

Due to the camp's vast area, we were not in a position to meet them all and the main thing is that they haven't filled in the forms included in the bilateral agreements. Moreover they didn't know about the form either. We believe we can resume the repatriation process very soon and are trying our best to cooperate with the authorities.

Bilateral cooperation has been aimed at working together for the repatriation of displaced persons settled in the border areas. As the handling of the border areas can cause misunderstandings, it is important for the relevant departments in both countries to discuss these issues transparently. Moreover, Myanmar is working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for development and resettlement projects in Rakhine State.

The rule of law and development are strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The advancement of the rule of law at the national level is essential for inclusive economic growth and stability. Likewise, the Rakhine Region will enjoy prosperity and sustainable development as long as the rule of law and stability prevails.

Prof. Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Chief Coordinator of UEHRD

According to the bilateral agreements in 2017, we try our best to explain to displaced persons about the repatriation



Arzemullah, a displaced person at Cox's Bazar camp. PHOTO: MNA

process and the purpose of our touring here. Preparations have been made to provide assistance to DPs who wish to return to Myanmar before the rainy season sets in, and to help with any problems they may be facing in the host country. As for the Myanmar side, we are ready for the repatriation process to begin.

Arzemullah, a displaced person at Cox's Bazar camp

Up to now, we haven't received any forms for the repatriation process, but there are some data collections, which can provide rice and other necessary assistance for us. — Thura Zaw

Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung