

Paritta recitation, merit making on New Year Day in Nay Pyi Taw

THE Myanmar people marked the end of Myanmar Era (ME) 1379 and the start of 1380 with an auspicious ceremony yesterday.

It is Myanmar tradition to wash away the dirt of the old year from the body with Thingyan water, while the dirt in the mind is washed away through merit making on New Year's Day.

The New Year's Day of ME 1380 started with people keeping the Sabbath in pagodas and monasteries, caring for personal hygiene of the elderly, paying respects to the elders, the Jivitadana donation of releasing animals from harm or captivity and other merit makings.

In Nay Pyi Taw, Sabbath keepers flocked to pagodas and monasteries, sayadaws and sanghas recited Paritta and the

crowd conducted donations, including Jivitadana donations.

In the morning, the 10th Paritta recitation ceremony to exorcise evil spirits and bad omens was held at the Cave of Uppatasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw, where pilgrims and audience took the Nine Precepts and listened to the sermons and recitation of Paritta delivered by the Sayadaws and Buddhist monks, led by Pyinmana Maha Withutayama Zaygon Monastery Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Bhaddanta Kavisara, who is the Ovadacariya (patron) of Uppatasanti Pagoda board of trustee. Present at the occasion were Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko and wife, Union Attorney General U Tun Tun Oo and wife,

Nay Pyi Taw Council members, members of the pagoda board of trustees, and members and staff of religious organisations. Later, the union minister and officials provided offertories to the Sayadaw and sanghas.

Later, the Sayadaw and monks recited Paritta in the Nay Pyi Taw Council area in a helicopter to repel imminent dangers and drive away evil spirits on the auspicious occasion of the New Year, sending Metta (loving kindness), and then, the sacred waters were sprayed aerially.

Similarly, famous pagodas in Nay Pyi Taw Council area such as Satta Sattaha Pagoda, Maha Sakya Ranthi Pagoda, Datu Jaya Datupaungsu Pagoda, Ko Kham Pagoda, Loka Marazein Pagoda, Yan Aung Myin Pagoda were



Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko and wife donate offertories to Sayadaw in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

crowded with people keeping Sabbath, merit makers making food donations and Jivitadana donation.

In the ministries, Dhammayones, wards and housing

apartments of public servants in Nay Pyi Taw, sayadaws, sanghas and monks were invited to recite Parittas and offerings of food and donations were made. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Myanmar strongly objects use of such words as “ethnic cleansing” or “genocide” in reference to the situation in Rakhine State: Permanent Representative to UN

Myanmar's Permanent Representative to UN spoke on Myanmar's efforts in prevention of sexual violence and measures taken to address the issue at the United Nations Security Council's open debate on Women, Peace and Security: “Preventing sexual violence in conflict through empowerment, gender equality and access to justice” at the United Nations Headquarters on 16 April 2018.

SPEAKING at the debate, Permanent Representative of Myanmar, Ambassador U Hau Do Suan explained Myanmar's position of preventing and addressing conflict – related sexual violence by taking further steps to cooperate with the United Nations. With regard to the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict related Sexual Violence, he said that the report acknowledges important steps taken by Myanmar to protect the rights of women and children. However, it is most regrettable that the Tatmadaw has been listed in the annex of the report despite Myanmar's genuine efforts to engage constructively with the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC). Besides, the decision of the listing was made based on unverified allegations in spite of our attempts to interview the alleged victims in the camps

of Cox's Bazar to investigate the cases. However, we are disappointed that our request for proper investigations had been denied.

With regard to the alleged sexual violence as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, the Government of Myanmar has made its position very clear that it will not condone any human rights abuse. If there is concrete evidence, we are ready to take action against any perpetrator in accordance with the law without impunity. The recent sentencing of seven military personnel to 10 years in prison with hard labour who were involved in the Inn Din incident, is a clear demonstration of the Government's strong commitment to the rule of law. Myanmar delegation categorically rejects the groundless accusations that sexual violence had been used as a strategy to force the Muslim people to flee their homes.

In Myanmar, sexual violence is crime strongly abhorred by our traditional values, and strictly forbidden by law and its culture. Myanmar delegation stressed that the members of the armed forces are subject not only to the Military Act of 1959 and Military by-laws, but also to the existing civilian laws and traditions. As such, severe legal action is taken against perpetrators, be they civilian or member of security forces. There were a number of evidences of prosecutions of military personnel for committing sexual violence.

Members of the armed forces have been clearly instructed to strictly follow Military Code of Conduct and not to involve in crimes including sexual violence. A series of capacity building workshops were held to educate military personnel on human rights. The curriculums of the military training schools include teaching of law related to prevention of sexual violence.

Myanmar strongly objects the use of such words as “ethnic cleansing” or “genocide” in reference to the situation in Rakhine State. Such irresponsible accusations based on unsubstantiated, one-sided allegations, fake news and tempered reports for political purpose, will only exacerbate the current situation and will lead to further polarization of different communities in the region.

He said such incessant rhetoric against Myanmar will only impact negatively on the existing cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations, as well as the on-going bilateral cooperation with Bangladesh in the efforts to find a lasting solution to the current humanitarian problem as well as the complex situation in Rakhine.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador U Hau Do Suan also reminded that as we all condemn conflict-relat-



Ambassador U Hau Do Suan, Permanent Representative of Myanmar to UN

ed sexual violence, we should also deplore the exploitation of this sensitive issue by certain groups as a tool to achieve their own political goal. The problem of sexual violence cannot be resolved through naming and blaming. The international community must take a constructive approach through sharing of information of violations and assisting the member states in their efforts to address the issue.—Myanmar News Agency ■