

Hostile attitude towards Myanmar will not contribute to peace and harmony

WHILE we are trying to solve the issues of Rakhine State in good faith through bilateral cooperation, it is most regrettable that instead of fulfilling its commitment for repatriation of the displaced persons as agreed upon in the bilateral agreements, the Bangladesh side has been deliberately making excuses to stall the repatriation process.

Bangladesh has been distorting the facts and telling the world that Myanmar is not willing to accept the return of the displaced persons. Bangladesh is altering the truth and vilifying the government and the people of Myanmar to solicit international condemnation and to exert maximum political pressure on Myanmar. We need full and sincere cooperation of the Government of Bangladesh if the repatriation process is to be successful.

When it comes to human rights abuses and violations, we should not forget the fact that the current humanitarian problem was the result of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorist attacks on 30 border guard posts in northern Rakhine. The root cause of the latest crisis and the brutal killings and atrocities committed by the terrorists on innocent ethnic Hindus, Rakhine Buddhists and other minority tribes was conveniently ignored by the western media.

We are seriously concerned that Bangladesh is unwittingly allowing extremism to rear its ugly head in this part of the region. ARSA is already having a foothold in the camps, and soon it will become a stronghold of terrorism and extremism. Recently, on 9 May, a group of four to six terrorists reportedly entered one of the refugee camps in Balukali and dragged 46-year-old Mohamed Faisal Ulhaq out of the camp and stabbed him to death. It was reported that he was advocating for return of IDPs to Rakhine among fellow displaced people in the camp. We will continue to implement the recommendations

of the Kofi Annan Report to the fullest extent possible in line with the situation on the ground to bring long-term peace, harmony and development to the people of Rakhine.

The international community, including the United Nations, should work together to create an environment conducive to restoring peace, harmony and development for all people in Rakhine State. Hate narratives that promote deep rooted mistrust should and must stop.

Bangladesh should cooperate fully with Myanmar in sincerity in the implementation of the bilateral agreement for repatriation of displaced persons. We are confident that we will be able to solve the present humanitarian problem and long-term peace and development of Rakhine State if Myanmar and Bangladesh work hand in hand with the spirit of mutual respect, genuine desire to help the displaced persons and the spirit of good neighborliness.

Plastic wastes

The plastic wastes are becoming not only nuisances, but also eyesores everywhere in the world and our country is no exception. As a matter of fact, our country may be amongst the worst, which are affected by the plastic wastes. Indiscriminately littered plastic grocery bags, empty plastic bottles, plastic packings, disposable plastic cups, plastic food wrappings and styrofoam food packings, etc, are common sights in Myanmar. They are so common that no one seems to mind them as though they are being accepted as part of our way of life.

Anywhere one goes in Yangon, they are bound to see the shamelessly littered plastic wastes clogging the drains, abandoned by the roadsides, piling up in the back lanes in the residential wards, lying all over the public parks, market places, schools and everywhere else.

Today, many countries in the world, including countries in the region are busy trying to get rid of the plastic wastes by every means. First they introduced the recycling process, then, by substituting the plastic bags with biodegradable plastics and materials such as banana, lotus and other broad tree leaves and paper. Many countries built incinerators to burn the unrecyclable plastic wastes and garbage, while electricity is also being produced as a byproduct during the process. Plastic wastes are now being recycled into asphalt concretes to pave roads in some countries. Some countries had baned the use of plastic grocery bags altogether.

Take Taiwan as an example

One good example is that of Taiwan. Their garbage disposal and collection system is very efficient. They don't keep garbage bins or litter boxes along roads or streets in full view of the public like in our country. They are to be found only inside shopping malls and public places like the train stations, airports, bus terminals, boat terminals, public parks and other such similar places. However, those who had been to Taiwan were surprised to find that their cities are spotlessly clean, but there are no garbage bins or litter boxes in full view.

So, how did they do that? Here, credit must be given to the efficient management of garbage disposal and collection systems. Their garbage management system got the admiration of even people from Singapore, a country many Myanmar referred to as a model to base our development schemes on.

As I had never been to Taiwan, I'll be citing a very interesting documentary, televised by the Channel News Asia (CNA) of Singapore. In fact, I had mentioned that documentary in one of my articles about 2 years back, but as it was too good an example that we should copy, please allow me to repeat it again.

The CNA reporter was having trouble in Taipei, capital of Taiwan as he couldn't find any garbage bin or litter box to dispose his empty plastic cup. He asked a passerby and was told that they can be found only in shops, department stores and public places like the train stations, bus terminals and boat terminals.

The reporter was surprised by that answer, but was awed by the cleanliness of the city, which was totally free of any litter. He queried how the residents dispose their garbage if there are no garbage pits or bins in the roads and streets. He found out that the garbage collecting trucks would come every night at 7 PM and park at specified places to receive the garbage directly from the residents.

Curiosity had the reporter waiting at one such place just before 7 PM. There already were people, both men, women and youths in their teens, queuing up with garbage bags in hand. The bags were of three different colours. Exactly at the appointed hour, a garbage truck arrived. The workers placed three

Let's do away with the plastics

By Khin Maung Myint



Photo credit to U Hla Myint

large fibreglass barrels of three different colours. One responsible person from the truck explained to the reporter that the bags had to be disposed in the barrel with the same colour, which was overseen by the crew of the garbage truck. When one barrel was filled up, it was covered with a lid and lifted onto the truck with a lifting gear and a new one of the same colour was placed. According to the documentary, the three different colours of the barrels and the garbage bags were to differentiate different types of wastes—one was for kitchen wastes, another for recyclable wastes: such as plastics bottles, containers and packagings and glass bottles and the last one for unrecyclable plastics and other materials to be destroyed.

When the truck left, the reporter and his camera crew went along. The first stop was at the animal breeding farm run by the department responsible for the garbage management. There the kitchen wastes, which were generally leftover foods were unloaded and dumped into giant blenders to be process into animal feeds. The second stop was at the incinerator where the wastes to be destroyed were unloaded. A power generating station was

incorporated with the incinerator. The final stop was at the recycling plant. Nothing was wasted.

The latest move by the Taiwanese authorities was to ban plastic grocery bags, plastic drinking straws and some utensils made of plastics. For that matter it is learnt that more and more counties are studying ways and means to reduce the reliance on the plastic bags, containers and packagings, as they are the main polluters. In some countries, shopping malls and other vendors are required to charge the customers for the plastic shopping bags to discourage the reliance on them.

Dangers of plastics

In our country it would be necessary to introduce plastic waste managements. In doing so, the first step should be to educate the people of the dangers of the plastics. Plastic is very much a staple in the world today but it's definitely not a perfect product. There are a large amount of toxins within many plastics, including bisphenol A (BPA), which may cause cancer in humans. Most of the people in our country are not aware of the harms they can inflict. At least they should be knowledgeable of these

health hazards. Here are 7 dangers of plastic and how they can negatively affect our health:-

- Chemicals in plastic disfigure genitals,
- Plastic increases the risk of childhood asthma,
- Chemicals in plastic kill female libido,
- Plastic is destroying our waterways
- Plastic has infiltrated food,
- Plastic destroys hormonal balance,
- You simply can't trust the plastic industry.

What is plastic pollution?

Plastic pollution is the accumulation of plastic products in the environment that adversely affects wildlife, wildlife habitats, or humans. Plastics that act as pollutants are categorized into micro-, meso-, or macro debris, based on size. Plastics are inexpensive and durable, and as a result levels of plastic production by humans are high. However, the chemical structure of most plastics renders them resistant to many natural processes of degradation and as a result they are slow to degrade. Together, these two factors have led to a high prominence of plastic pollution in the environment.

Plastic pollution can afflict land, waterways and oceans. Living organisms, particularly marine animals, can be harmed either by mechanical effects, such as entanglement in plastic objects or problems related to ingestion of plastic waste, or through exposure to chemicals within plastics that interfere with their physiology. Humans are also affected by plastic pollution, such as through disruption of various hormonal mechanisms. Here, I would like to mention some salient facts and figures about plastic waste :-

- 80% of plastic waste in the ocean comes from land-based sources,
- The items most commonly found on beaches are single-use plastics, such as: grocery bags, food packaging, bottles and utensils,
- 40% of plastic produced each year becomes single-use packaging.

Conclusion

The despicable littering in our country should be blamed on the deep-rooted bad habits or behaviours of our people and also on the authorities. There are many who want to dispose the litters properly into garbage bins or litter boxes, but no adequate facilities or arrangements are provided for decades in the past. That led to the bad habits or behaviours of many people becoming deep-rooted and reckless littering becomes a way of life. Also, when the present garbage bin system was first introduced a few years back, I noticed that they were not adequate enough. Also, the locations chosen were mainly on the busy roads, but none inside the residential wards where the population is more dense.

Lastly, I would like to mention that, to prevent littering and pollutions, proper managements and garbage disposal methods should be introduced. More incinerators should be constructed, because if incineration of non-recyclable plastics is performed with high-efficiency energy recovery; less CO2 would be released than by disposing plastic waste in landfills. Banning of the use of plastic utensils, especially the thin shopping bags, plastic and styrofoam food containers would also contribute to the reductions of CO2. To date, about 75 countries in the world have taken actions to reduce the consumption of plastic bags. At the same time the public should be educated about the adverse consequences of the plastics. I am sure, all these undertakings would aid in the creation of a plastic pollution free environment and at the same time keep the climate change at bay.

References:

1. Plastic pollution—Wikipedia.
2. Documentary video by Channel News Asia (CNA).

Appointment of Ambassador agreed

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mr. Basil Vasilică Constantinescu as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Basil Vasilică Constantinescu was born on 2 May 1969 in Târgoviste, Romania. He obtained a Bachelor degree from the University of Bucharest in 1994. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania in 1997 and had served in various capacities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romanian Embassy in Indonesia, EU Delegation to Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and ASEAN and European Union Mission to ASEAN till August 2017. He also served as a Visiting Professor on Theory of International Relations at the University of Bucharest and Diplomatic Academy of Romania from 2003 to 2006. Since October 2017, he has been serving as Ambassador of Romania to the People's Republic of China and Mongolia. He can speak Thai, Indonesian, French and Chinese languages.

He is married, with two daughters. ■

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointment of U Thein Htay Oo, Director-General, Education and Training Department, under the Ministry of Border Affairs on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.
2. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Thuang Kyaing, Deputy Director-General (Administration), Department of Marine Administration under the Ministry of Transport and Communications as Director-General of the same department on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Rain or thundershowers expected over many regions today

Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Upper Sagaing, Yangon, Ayeyarwady and Taninthayi regions, Kachin northern Shan, Chin, Kayin and Mon states and isolated in the remaining regins and states today, with 80 per cent degree of certainty, according to the forecast of the weather bureau.

The Meteorology and Hydrology Department has warned people to be alert to the possibility of thunderstorms, lightning, isolated heavy rainfall, gale-force winds and hailstones caused by dense cumulus clouds in April and May.

In Myanmar, between April 2017 and March 2018, 109 lightning strikes were reported around the country, killing 111 people and injuring 39.

Generally, thunderstorms mostly occur in April and May in Myanmar. But, this year has seen early untimely weather patterns across the country, according to the weather bureau.

Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the North and South Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal today. —GNLM ■