



ရခိုင်ပြည်နယ်ဆိုင်ရာနေ့စဉ်သတင်းအကျဉ်းချုပ် Daily News Brief on Rakhine State Affairs

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Union Ministers reaffirm Myanmar's willingness and readiness to receive displaced persons at Press Conference

Yangon, April 19

A press conference on the visit of the Myanmar delegation led by Dr. Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement of Myanmar, to Cox's Bazar and Dhaka, Bangladesh from 11 to 13 April was held at National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC), in Yangon on 20 April.

Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe, stated in his opening remarks that Myanmar wished to implement, in an expeditious manner, the bilateral agreement on return of displaced persons from Rakhine State signed by the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh on 23 November 2018. Myanmar unilaterally identified 508 Hindu villagers from Rakhine who had expressed their desire to return. Myanmar side was informed by the Bangladesh authorities that Hindus would be part of the last segment of the first batch. Myanmar verified and sent additional list of names of 750 Muslim villagers so that the first batch comprising 750 Muslim and 508 Hindu villagers could be repatriated expeditiously. He said that no response had been received so far.

During the visit of the Minister for Home Affairs of Myanmar to Bangladesh, the delegation was provided with the forms of 8032 displaced persons from Rakhine State. The forms were found to be different from prescribed forms agreed in the Physical Arrangement for Repatriation. Myanmar had requested the Bangladesh side on three separate occasions through diplomatic channels to forward duly-filled prescribed forms.

The Union Minister added that Myanmar believed that it would be beneficial to send a team to Bangladesh headed by Dr. Win Myat Aye, to explain to the people in the camps in Cox's Bazar and encourage them to return. The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar and Ambassador of Norway to Myanmar were invited to join the delegation. The UN Resident Coordinator responded that he could not join the visit. The Ambassador of Norway initially planned to join the



delegation. Subsequently, as she was the only diplomat among the members of delegation, she cancelled to participate in the trip. During the visit, the Myanmar delegation requested to meet with 508 people of Hindu faith, 750 Muslim villagers and over 600 verified residents of Rakhine. The delegation found it disappointing as they were unable to meet the persons they requested to see. The delegation met with a number of displaced persons and explained to them the preparations made by Myanmar for their repatriation of displaced persons. The delegation was told that they were not provided with any form and they had no knowledge of the repatriation agreement.

In the meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs of Bangladesh, the delegation informed the Ministers that the forms sent back to Myanmar were not the prescribed forms agreed upon between the two governments. The Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the Myanmar delegation that proper forms would be sent soon. The delegation informally learnt from the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh that the forms of 8032 persons sent by Bangladesh were arranged through the community leaders without the consent of the individuals concerned. As the condition of camps in Cox's Bazar is poor, it is imperative to receive the returnees as soon as possible.

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye said that the delegation was not able to meet the requested displaced persons despite meeting with some from the camps in Cox's Bazar including some who spoke Myanmar language fluently. He learnt that the displaced persons had no knowledge of the forms to be filled for repatriation and no one had explained to them about the forms.

Chief Coordinator of UEHRD Dr. AungTunThetsaid that the Myanmar side was ready to receive the returnees and confirmed that the Myanmar side was taking necessary steps to provide livelihoods for the returnees. He said that unfortunately the delegation experienced that some media incorrectly mentioned on what the delegation did not say. The cooperation of the media is crucial.

U ThaugTun, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government made the closing remarks. He said that Myanmar had already made necessary preparations for the repatriation in accordance with the agreement. He reaffirmed that Myanmar was ready and willing to receive the verified returnees under the principle of voluntary, safe and dignified return. Those who expressed their willingness to return should be allowed to do so.