Defence Services discharges 96 minors to reunite with families

Nay Pyi Taw, 18 Jan — According to an action plan between the Office of Commander-in-Chief (Army) and Country Taskforce on Monitoring and Reporting on grave violations of child rights (CTFMR), a ceremony to return minors to their parents took place at No (1) Transit Centre in Yangon this morning. A total of 96 children have been discharged from Defence Services after scrutinizing them in respective military commands.

Present at the ceremony were Maj-Gen Than Soe of the Office of Commander- in-Chief (Army) and senior military officers, the deputy ministers, the directors-general, officials of UN Agencies and INGOs, minors and their parents.

First, Maj-Gen Than Soe and Mrs. Renata Lok- Dessallien of CTFMR spoke on the occasion. Next, officials presented documents allowing them to discharge from the Defence Services and citizenship scrutiny cards for those aged between 10 and 18 to the minors who rejoined their parents and guardians.

After the ceremony, the minors have been taken to the rehabilitation centre organized by CTFMR and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. Minors will be provided with family reunion program, medical check-ups and treatment, if necessary, opportunities to have access to formal and non-formal education for employment, personal goods and cash assistance at the centre.

Similar ceremonies were held, discharging 42 on September in 2012 for the first time, 24 on 15 February in 2013, 42 on 7 July in 2013 and 68 on 8 August in 2013. Today's ceremony was the fifth time.

As details were agreed and made to implement the action plan, the Defence Services will continue to supervise in order to ensure no minors in the Defence Services within 18 months. The Defence Services is carrying out scrutiny not to recruit minors for military service and to discharge underage recruits as soon as possible. Moreover, actions have been taken against 40 officers and 229 other ranks in accord with the military code of conduct.—*MNA*

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