

President U Thein Sein meets with the Interfaith Friendship Group, 13 July 2013

Only mutual respect and trust, understanding and religious tolerance could bring peaceful co-existence: President

Yangon, 13 July — President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein met with the patron, the chairman and executives of Interfaith Friendship Group at the hall of Yangon Region Government's Office today. Also present were Union Ministers at President Office U Soe Thane, U Aung Min, U Tin Naing Thein, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe and Chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw Citizen's Fundamental Rights, Democracy and Human Rights Committee U Htay Oo.

In his address, the President said that the process of State Building, Nation Building and Peace Building was in progress in Myanmar; that now is the time when the country is on the track to shaping a New National Identity which is acceptable to all citizens, all national races and all races and all religions to be able to build a peaceful and harmonious society; that there could be unity, trust, friendship and sense of patriotism among citizens and national races, regardless of race and religion, if it existed in the society; that religious conflict and misunderstanding were deeply rooted since the colonial period, but tolerance and harmony among the different races with different beliefs brought a pluralism to live together for many years throughout the history.

The two communities gave protection to each other, during the conflicts caused by extremists of the two communities, and provided relief aids to families who had become victims of the conflicts, that lower educational standard and economic difficulties were attributed to conflicts; that the government was striving to implement social and economic reforms so as to address the problems; and that protection should be given to freedom of religion and freedom of expression so that democracy in Myanmar will flourish.

He added that only mutual respect and trust, understanding and tolerance for ensuring the freedom of religion could bring a peaceful coexistence; that Myanmar society would be proud of being a pluralistic society; that he would like to call on each and every citizen to pay mutual respect on different beliefs and to fight against religious hatred. All need to oppose those who are trying to fuel the conflicts by using the religion as a political tool in their interests and take legal actions against those people. He called for providing assistance to those victims, regardless of races and religions and remedies for their trauma.

He urged local people to join hands in government's cooperation with Civil Societies Organizations (CSOs), townsenders and respective international organizations. Even the UN criticizes the government as some are trying to bring these issues into regional and

international problems. He urged the Interfaith Friendship Group to make efforts for avoiding the recurrence of similar riots and violence, maintaining country's dignity and protecting people from the danger.

According to four main religions enshrined in the Constitution, the essence of all religions teach people to be civilized and tolerant, to have loving-kindness and to be able to distinguish between right and wrong. So, as a democracy country, all must accept religious freedom, he added.

After that, Interfaith Group Patron Retd Ambassador U Hla Maung, Chairman Retd Ambassador U Sein Win Aung, Vice Chairman U Nyunt Maung Shein, Secretary U Tha Nyan and executive members touched upon group's ongoing tasks and future tasks. After that, the Union Ministers, the Region Chief Minister and Pyithu Hluttaw representative gave supplementary reports.

The President called for making cooperation between the government and the organizations to avoid the recurrence of the conflicts, taking lessons from the past incidents. The government on its part would continue to deal with the suggestions, he added.

After the meeting, the President cordially greeted the members of the Interfaith Group. —
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