

Peace process not end with ceasefire Discussions, debates on Constitution indicate democratic Practices taking shape in Myanmar society

A void taking extreme measures when dealing with constitutional amendment

My fellow citizens:

I would like to inform all of you about the recent changes and developments that have taken place in our country as well as the progress made in the peace process in this month's radio program.

First of all, I would like to wholeheartedly welcome the peace conference of the leaders of the ethnic armed groups that is being held since the end of last month. I understand that this conference is being held with a view to discussing the issues related to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement that is planned to take place in the near future. I am very happy to hear that the deliberation at the conference was very constructive and that its emphasis was on achieving lasting peace which all citizens have longed for. I would like to reiterate that I will be welcoming all ethnic armed groups to the signing ceremony of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement after they successfully conclude the peace conference.

I would like to briefly explain the objectives of holding the signing ceremony of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. We are holding the ceremony because we want to comply with the demands of the ethnic armed groups, reaffirm all existing agreements and undertake the tasks needed to inaugurate the peace dialogue process immediately after the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. I would like to reaffirm once more that the peace process will not end with ceasefire; we are committed to launching the political dialogue process from the foundation of ceasefires we have already achieved. I would also like to make clear again that in the current peace process the government discussed all the proposed items from the ethnic armed groups without setting any preconditions. Such actions helped us to successfully build trust with the ethnic armed groups. The mutual trust we have built so far also allowed the government and the ethnic armed groups to work together in solving unfortunate problems such as the recent incidences of explosions. I am convinced that the Laiza peace conference of the leaders of ethnic armed groups will pave the way for the successful inauguration of the political dialogue process.

The way in which a person may view the pace of the political process and the reforms depends on his or her political views, perspectives and norms. The analysis of the recent political discussions and debates on the Constitution indicates that democratic practices have begun to take shape in our society. It is our national duty for all of us to try to do everything we can to make sure that these democratic practices are consolidated and become deeply rooted in our society. In so doing, we should avoid the two extremes— slow actions that

could significantly slow down the democratization process and fast actions that could lead to gaps in the process. Our society must try to achieve pragmatic results that are more reflective of our current political situation. We should also avoid taking extreme measures when dealing with constitutional amendment. Instead of simply focusing on what we want, we should act objectively with the right intentions to fulfill the wishes of people and try to achieve the possibilities available to us in our current political climate.

The Political Prisoners Review Committee recently released 56 political prisoners with intention to further strengthen our efforts to achieve national unity. We will continue to do everything we can to make sure that no political prisoners remain in prisons.

I also visited Rakhine State during October. I personally witnessed the riots in Thandwe during that trip. Such episodes show that there are still many challenges hampering our efforts to build an open society. The members of the society as a whole will need to work hand in hand with each other in order to resolve these challenges. I have instructed the local authorities to continue to endeavor in their efforts to enhance the bedrock of conflict resolution, namely prevalence of law and order and regional stability. I have also urged the social, religious and community leaders to work with each other in finding solutions through dialogue.

I would also like to inform all of you that Myanmar has taken up the ASEAN Chairmanship on October 10 at the summit held in Brunei. This is the first time we have assumed the ASEAN Chairmanship in the past 17 years. The fact that we are able to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship indicates that both ASEAN and the international community have faith in the government, the people and the future of our country.

By assuming the ASEAN Chairmanship, we are taking an important duty and responsibility in the international community. At the same time, we are entrusted with this duty mainly because the progress in the political reform process has reached a respectable level. We will therefore be performing this duty on behalf of the entire nation.

The duty of the ASEAN Chairmanship involves more than leading the association; we will have to take the lead in ASEAN's cooperation with such world powers as the United States, Peoples' Republic of China, India, Japan, the European Union and Russia. The year of our ASEAN Chairmanship is an important year because we will have to undertake all the preparations needed for the inauguration of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. While serving as the Chairman of ASEAN, we will be hosting the ASEAN Summit and other important meetings at Nay Pyi Taw where we will have to take the lead in discussing important international issues.

In the upcoming year, we will be doing everything necessary to make ASEAN become a powerful regional organization and to improve the relations between ASEAN and the rest of the international community. This is also an indication that Myanmar has adopted a new approach to the international community and international relations. Our current foreign policy priorities do not only concern protecting Myanmar's national interests; we are also trying to become a responsible member of the family of nations.

To sum up my speech for this month, our society is going through an important period of political reform processes. These processes are full of challenges and we will have to try to resolve them every step of the way. On the one hand we will have to resolve various types of

problems and on the other hand we can already see concrete rays of hope for the future. I would therefore like to urge all of you to work together to make sure on the basis of such hopes and determinations that the political and other reform processes are viable. In conclusion, I would like to say that I have dedicated all of my efforts to achieve peace, improve the social and economic welfare of the people and create a better and brighter future for the younger generation.

May you all have peace of mind and good health. — *MNA*
