

President U Thein Sein Meets Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties

Yangon, 29 March—President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein met leaders and representatives of political parties at Mingala Hall of Yangon Region Government, here, at 9 am on Saturday.

At the meeting, the President delivered an opening address. Full Text of the President's speech is as follows;

I am very delighted to see 65 political parties that are enthusiastically taking part in Myanmar's democratic transition. Despite meeting with the political parties three times before, the three meetings had limitations.

Now is a very important transitional period for Myanmar. After taking office, the government prioritized three tasks: The first priority is to achieve internal peace, political reform and national reconciliation, second is national level development for the entire people and third is making preparations to create a better Myanmar society for the next generation. Some matters met with success while others call for follow- up tasks.

Firstly, I would like to talk about the peace process that has reached a certain stage during the previous three-year period. State level ceasefire agreements were signed with 14 out of 16 organizations and Union level meetings held. Talks with the remaining two organizations are in progress. While working on the peace process, negotiation is progressing and moving towards a nationwide ceasefire agreement.

In meeting with leaders of national races, religious association and political parties in Myitkyia of Kachin State last week, I gave an account of the present progress in political and peace process and urged them to contribute as much as they can. I would like to present an example of a fellow ASEAN member, the Philippines, where the historic Bangsamoro peace pact was signed on 27 March after 17-year long negotiations. We could be in more difficulties while holding talks with several armed organizations. But, we had reached today's stage thanks to participation and cooperation of all. I would like to stress the need for more effort to make more progress.

It is required to hold a political dialogue to pave the way for the emergence of a federal Union that guarantees mutual respect and equality inspired by the national races. During the course of history, durable peace could not be built through ceasefire only. So, we are moving towards a peace process based on political dialogues. It is necessary to reach a durable stage regarding the ceasefire at the same time.

A meeting on formulation of political frameworks will be held after signing a nationwide ceasefire agreement. All participants are to decide how to move towards a political dialogue, what will have to be discussed and who will take part in the political dialogue. All forces are to clearly understand what road map is needed to find peace. Based on the political framework, plans are underway to hold the political dialogue that includes those who should be there. The door is kept open to discuss all matters except matters related to secession from the Union of Myanmar, and issues that can harm national sovereignty. I believe the political

dialogue will produce a historic peace pact of Myanmar. It is also required to take potential consequences of its outcome into consideration.

Discussions on constitutional amendment, one of the desires of political parties, will be allowed at the political dialogue.

Regarding the constitutional amendment, I would like to repeat some of my views on it. I agree with the basic principal of amending the constitution in order to be in harmony with political, economic and social needs of Myanmar in accord with an opportune time. Thanks to political awareness and media freedom brought about by sweeping reforms of the country, debates on matters related to constitutional amendment and amendments to other laws have been made freely.

There are three parts of constitutional amendment: firstly, constitutional amendment is needed for agreements that will come out of the political dialogue which is an essential prerequisite for the peace process; secondly, it is needed for meeting democratic standards and values necessary for the establishment of open and independent society; and thirdly, it is needed for setting necessary qualifications for political leadership. From my point of view, on the one hand, I have a political goodwill allowing every Myanmar citizen to take the lead in Myanmar politics, but on the other, I am willing to see proper basic principles that can guarantee national interest and integrity of national sovereignty.

Our aim is to resolve the problems of the country through cooperation during the political dialogue. I hope the political dialogue will be held in the presence of political parties, parliamentarians, national race leaders and others who should be included in it apart from the government and national race armed organizations and problems addressed through negotiation.

A nationwide ceasefire agreement is aimed not only at reaching a durable stage in the ceasefire process but also paving the way for holding a political dialogue. Despite ups and downs in the peace process, signatories to the nationwide ceasefire agreement are to approve a clear determination in order not to make a U-turn.

The next point is about development. Our government is trying hard to ensure better relations with the international community and infrastructure in the sectors of telecommunication, health and education, introducing lots of relaxation of restrictions. But, some requirements still remain. I would like to call on all political parties to join hands with us. I would like to stress the need for cooperation and coordination for ensuring a better outcome and a smooth transition.

I understand that the aim of all political parties is to make a better society based on peace, democracy, equality and development. I believe we can make more cooperation in the future as we all have a same goal. Despite differences, leaders of political parties will provide suggestions to the government and there will be discussions between us.

It is expected to see many difficulties while translating the old system into a democratic one regarding political reform and national reconciliation. Problems will be addressed as far as we cooperate. We should be role models for the entire people to inspire the needs of the people to get accustomed to democratic practices and customs. We all have to build a democratic society. The onus is on us all to lay down democratic foundations for the future nation. A challenge we will see is how much of cooperation we can make. Greater cooperation is needed to stand united together. Only when we make greater cooperation and we stand united together, will our nation-building endeavours take good shape.

All in all, I wish leaders of political parties will cooperate with the government in the coming political dialogues for the sake of the country and its people. I would like to urge all of you to make history while translating the nation into a democracy through a smooth transition.

It was attended by General Secretary of Kayan National Party U Nan Yi, Chairman of Chin Progressive Party U Do Htang Kap, Chairman of 88 Generation Student Youths (the Union of Myanmar) U Ye Tun, Vice-Chairman of Union Pa-O National Organization U Khun Myo Myint Oo, Chairman of National Democratic Force U Khin Maung Swe, Chairman of Chin National Democratic Party U Zo Zam, Chairman of Myanmar New Society Democratic Party U Zin Aung, General Secretary of All Mon Regions Democracy Party Dr Min Nwe Soe, Chairman of Zomi League for Democracy U Pu Ciint Shin Thang, Information in-charge of National Development and Peace Party U Mohamed Salin and Chairman of Shan Nationalities Democratic Party U Sai Aik Paung. Leaders from political parties expressed their opinions on issues of the constitution, peace-making process, 2015 elections, the development of social economy, national races affairs and providing assistance for political parties.

The President reviewed the discussions. Chairman of Union Election Commission U Tin Aye and Union Ministers also participated in the discussions with leaders and representatives of the political parties.

MNA
