Speech delivered by C-in-C of Defence Services at 4th anniversary of NCA

TODAY is the fourth anniversary of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) which is signed to practically realize internal unity and peace which is the actual requirement of our country. I would like to extend greetings that may all the government officials led by the President of the State, officials of ethnic armed organizations, officials of internal/external organizations taking part in the multiple sectors for national peace, and all the attendees at this ceremony enjoy peace and tranquility and have greater unity and strength in serving the interest of the State and the Union and in realizing peace.

The present is the fourth ceremony marking the NCA meeting, and at every ceremony officials extended greeting and delivered addresses. I also extended greetings at the previous three ceremonies. First, I would like to remind you some of the important points of my previous speeches.

At the first anniversary, I explained the emergence of the NCA and spoke of the need to pay attention to the six peace principles of the Tatmadaw. As regards the NCA I recounted the period of over four years from the time all the EAOs were invited to the peace talks in opening a new chapter for peace till it is first signed on 15 October 2015 and the implementation of the different stages of peace process through unity and collective power as a reinvigoration for future stages of the peace process. I dealt with the conviction the Tatmadaw it received from its peace endeavours throughout the different periods of history and its objective goal, which is its six peace principles. Moreover, I also explained in detail that six peace principles and NCA would pave the way for establishing a federal democratic Union through peace.

At the second anniversary, I explained that the Tatmadaw had paved the way towards multiparty democracy, aspired by the entire people, and the political, economic and social preparations made since the administration of the Tatmadaw government to conveniently proceed on the path, the importance of NCA and the need to sign the NCA.

At the third anniversary, I elaborated on the broadening of the powers by making additions and amendments to the schedule 2 and 5 of the State Constitution (2008) in connection with the importance of the expression "non-secession" in interest of the people and then explained in detail the history of Tatmadaw and the matter of the sole Tatmadaw together with historical backgrounds. I made those clarifications to express the Tatmadaw's steadfast stand on the NCA, its serious attitude towards peace, non-disintegration of the Union and non-disintegration of national solidarity. The Tatmadaw will firmly continue its peace process, while standing by the NCA.

I have already said it is Tatmadaw soldiers who want most to end internal armed conflicts as they have to risk life and limb in armed clashes. To prove this statement, Tatmadaw declared unilateral ceasefire, which is unprecedented in Myanmar's history, on 21 December, 2018, ushering into first over four months of unilateral ceasefire. Before that, some EAOs, some political forces, and some local and foreign organizations continuously suggested that Tatmadaw should declare ceasefire with magnanimity, and that peace would be achieved if Tatmadaw did so. Tatmadaw acted on their suggestions and declared unilateral ceasefire, which is unprecedented around the world, proving its commitment to peace. Tatmadaw extended its unilateral ceasefire four times with the hope of expediting the peace process, and the ceasefire period covered nine months through 21 September, 2019. People around the country have witnessed the harsh realities of what happened.

In some areas overseen by five military commands where Tatmadaw declared unilateral ceasefire for the sake of eternal peace, although few places face clashes to least numbers, there were clashes between EAOs over territorial disputes, and people had suffered consequences. Meanwhile, some EAOs, taking advantage of the ceasefire, strengthened their armies and expanded their territories. There were murders of innocent civilians and targeted attacks on roads, bridges, towns and villages.

Clashes have virtually ceased in some regions, but the situation was different in Rakhine State. Rakhine had in successive periods been a stable and peaceful area coded as white color, but instability arose due to terrorist acts of the ARSA in Buthidaung and Maungtaw, and the lives and property of local ethnic people including Rakhine, Mro and Khami were put at risk. Entire villages had to flee. Tatmadaw made much sacrifice to protect the lives and property of our local ethnic people, who are the minority there. Amid instability created by the ARSA, the AA launched insurgent attacks on four outnumbered border guard police outposts which were protecting ethnic villages in Buthidaung, on 4 January, 2019, bringing its insurgency to next level. Those attacks were inappropriate for our democratization process.Tatmadaw just cannot stand by and do nothing in response to those insurgent attacks. Tatmadaw have to protect local ethnic people against the ARSA, as well as against the AA's insurgency at the same time.

During the unilateral ceasefire, Tatmadaw urged the ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to discuss peace process with the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC) in a more effective manner. If necessary, a Tatmadaw negotiation team was formed with eight Tatmadaw members. On 1 July and 14 August, Tatmadaw issued two statements, calling on the EAOs to be able to discuss peace process without minimum delay because it does not advance as the entire ethnic people expected. However, roads, bridges, towns and villages existing on Mandalay-Lashio-Muse Union Highway had to experience destructive acts committed by the terrorists as of 15 August. Terrorist attacks were found in PyinOoLwin, Nawnghkio, Lashio and Kutkai. We will have to review such destructive situations. We will have to ask whether these ethnic were their rights.

> In peace process, pointing the finger at the past will not secure peace. All of us, who belong to the present time, share the responsibility to build a more peaceful and developed socio-economy.

The root cause of internal insurgency currently occurring in our country was due to the divide-and-rule policy practiced by the colonialists. The consequences of divide-and-rule administration resulted in the disunity among our ethnics and changed into ethnic armed conflicts. In the parliamentary democratic era from 1948 to 1958 after regaining independence, the differences in politics, race, ethics and ideology became the root cause of armed conflicts, an armed policy that was opposed to successive governments currently taking place until now. Tatmadaw is an organization that is responsible for defending the State and its sovereignty. The EAOs, themselves, know very well how they existed, where they derived from which organizations and their origins.

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivers a speech at the 4th anniversary of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

We have no reasons to blame the past period for what had happened and blaming can't bring about more development. Most of the ethnic organizations are saying about self-administration in building internal peace at the present time. It is also a matter to be prioritized. In so doing, the peace process becomes smoother and speedier. Tatmadaw always pays prioritized attention to the ethnic affairs while performing the interests of the people. For that reason, I assume that ethnic demands should be favoured in the move of constitutional amendment. The Union Peace Conference also known as the 21st Century Panglong Conference came into existence as ethnics' peace desire is favoured. In this state, I believe peace and politics should be beheld in separate ways and it will work properly and practically. Panglong Conference is to regain independence and it is to discuss how to establish the Union after regaining independence. The politics is discussed as priority. The Union Peace Conference (21st Century Panglong Conference) that is currently held is to mainly focus on peace how to immediately end the armed conflicts. We must aware of this fact.

Tatmadaw always seeks to serve the interests of the people and national interests of the country either in the peace process or nation-building endeavors. Successive governments in successive periods must have done to the best of their ability in undertaking those kinds of tasks, depending on the time and situation.

In peace process, pointing the finger at the past will not secure peace. All of us, who belong to the present time, share the responsibility to build a more peaceful and developed socio-economy. I would like to suggest that if we assess objectively our faults and shortcomings of the past and continue to work with genuine desire for the peace, the peace process will be successful. We must aware of the fact that peace negotiation for achieving eternal peace will not be successful if the dialogue is clouded with doubts and extreme self-interest.

At this juncture, I would like to say the federal system talked by ethnic armed organizations and some political forces. I know they define various meanings of the federal system in different norms. No matter how different meanings they define and various norms they set, its essence is "together" and "harmony".

We need to focus on the topics in detail how to implement the rights and aims resulted from discharging duties and obligations for united living and harmony through the peaceful negotiation and searching answers which is a democratic way.

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In so doing, only when we hold coordination meetings with the united spirit that 'We all are Myanmar", without emphasizing race, state, region and own organization alone, can we do well.

Currently, the Tatmadaw has made wider studies and been studying the federal system, many quarters are talking about. Studies have been made not only in books and papers but also in the countries which are practising such a system. With regard to the findings, practice of federal system is different from one country to another. Various differences were found in definition, provision, practical exercise, background histories of these countries, organizational setup, structural works, time and situations.

When the studies were made on successful practice of the Union system of India which is the most similar to our country, we found the federal system is not the rights of secession and that it is not fixed how to undertake, and that it is realized in conformity with own race and geographical conditions. It was found that democracy federal system is based on power sharing between the central government and state governments through the trend of agreements of the majority without harming own country, national interest of own race and sovereignty of the State. To do so, the tables on rights of legislature are exactly mentioned in the constitution.

With regard to this point, we need to consider the rights of self-ruling. We need to widely consider and to seek the best way for such issue. It needs to review that what laws region and state Hluttaws have passed in connection with Schedules 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the Union Legislative List mentioned in the constitution of our country and to what degree the development undertakings for the regions and states have been carried out based on the said laws. Moreover, it needs to review that how they practically applied the extended rights of the legislative lists of regions, states, self-administered division and zones.

There are not issues that just prescribing the rights, chances, entitlements and responsibilities is not complete. We all must practically strive for building it. As democracy is a system which centres the people, the entire ethnic people must have higher knowledge and skill power to be able to work in concert.

Knowledge is experiences we have passed along our lives, and skill is to a technique to learn. We all should apply the knowledge and skills in development of our region, town and country. Anyone will not strive for successful building the democratic federal Union. We will establish the federal democracy system that is suitable to the country. Our ethnic people and citizens ourselves must strive for nation-building tasks.

In so doing, instead of the focus on a single desire that is incompatible with the country's situation, paying attention to the possibilities suitable for our country will facilitate and speed up our peace process. For example, rather than demand for self-administration, ways to ensure perfection by amending or supplementing Tables 2, 3 and 5 is more natural, I suppose.

Our country is a multi-ethnic Union. Any region or state is not inhabited by a single ethnic group. Various nationalities live across the country. The only difference is that they are less or many in number. This is a natural phenomenon. Based on the objective conditions, we can know what consequences we will face if a law is promulgated for a single region, state or race.

Moreover, there are some citizens in the country who are not our ethnics. Despite differences in the fundamental rights for ethnic people and citizens, it can be seen that all are making collective efforts in the interests of the country with a spirit of Myanmar.

Tatmadaw members are serving the interests of the country and the people by shouldering military duties. Tatmadaw is the fence of our country. Only if the fence is strong enough, will State peace and stability prevail. With peace and stability, all national people and citizens will have no problem with their living conditions. Today's actual need is to improve social economy of the people with increasing demand so as to increase income through goods from the products manufactured by genuine labour of the citizens. For these conditions, Tatmadaw is carrying out national defence and security duties as well as cooperating with the true wish. We will continue to perform our duties conscientiously in the interests of the country and the people.

I would like to conclude by saying that we all have to continue our peace journey with new strength and invigorated spirit, reminiscing the landmark of being able to sign the NCA in our peace history.

In national building efforts, we need to replace the old and outdated ideas with new and updated ones.

In building a Union based on democracy and federalism, we will be able to achieve eternal peace promptly if we try hard with Union spirit and the true wish of seeing peace.

Thank you all

Tatmadaw rescues police constable abducted by AA

A search and rescue column of Tatmadaw founded Police Constable Sai Naing Aung near Kyauktan village in Rakhine State, according to the report of Office of Commander in Chief.

He was one of the abductees taken AA armed group on 26 October.

The police constable and the released abductees said that a Tatmadaw officer purchased a ticket for Shwenadi Watercraft from Sittway to Buthidaung, mentioning his name and military rank. The information about a military officer in the passengers was released and AA armed group stopped the vessel near Yemyat village.

They called the name of that military officer and took him and some passengers. The AA members also used three motorboats to bring the remaining passengers, heading to Kyauktan village.

While some members of AA group and passengers were awaiting vessels on the bank, the five abductees, including Police Constable Sai Naing Aung, were tied and shot by small weapons before dropping into water. The police constable was flowing in the water with a gun injury before he was found by the search and rescue column of Tatmadaw.

Tatmadaw used helicopters and ground units to find the abductees, and 15 of them have been rescued until now. Shwenadi Watercraft line is under investigation for the information release about passengers and the Tatmadaw search and rescue columns are finding more abductees.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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