

All must try to see national race youths who brandished guns using laptops Government not divided into hard-liners and soft-liners



NAY PYI TAW, 1 March-The following is the translation of the address delivered by President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein's at today's third regular session of first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in accord with the section 210 of the Constitution in commemoration of the first anniversary of the government's inauguration.

Esteemed Speaker and representatives of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw,

Under the Section 210 of the Constitution, I am here explaining the policies of the State, accomplishments of the government within a year and future programmes through this Hluttaw for public knowledge.

First, I wish the entire nation, all citizens who became expatriates for certain reasons, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker, the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives good health and happiness.

This month marks the first anniversary of the transfer of the administrative power to our government. On this occasion, I through Hluttaw representatives would like to present a brief account of our government's achievements, ongoing tasks and future programmes to our compatriots who have entrusted the State executive power to us.

Our vigorous constitutional democratic transition has now systematically reached a peaceful path. The international media has named our democracy transition 'Burma spring' or 'Myanmar spring. As our stable and correct transition is gaining more and more international recognition, we need continuous efforts to win further trust. Our country is in the transition to a system of democracy with the constitution as the core. In fact, it is the uniqueness of our country and our people.

Have we already completed building a new nation where genuine democracy and eternal principles flourish? No, we still have much more to do. We will have to make more strides. Actually, it is a long-term endeavour for perpetuity and burgeoning of a Myanmar democratic society. We had achievements as well as challenges during the one-year period.

We have been working very hard as we saw a lot of people at home and abroad who had doubts on our government or who had no trust in our government during the previous year.

Our people have experienced numerous governments throughout the successive eras. Our practical endevours and the objective conditions will bear testimony to the quality of our government. In the meantime, we on our part have already understood and accepted in all seriousness that our present undertakings are on the path vitally important in shaping the future of our country and people.

Our government, in fact, is a turning point to a historic beginning for the next generations. This is our conviction. We also solemnly accept the fact that the extent of success, stability and durability of the transition process of the present government will become the legacy for the future successive governments. When it comes to nation-building, peace and stability, unity, order and steadfastness are

of vital importance in changing from one era to another and from one system to another. If we compare our situation with the current global situation, our democratization process is a successful transition which the people can take as a model with great admiration. Who deserves credit? Not only the government, but also all the stakeholders including political parties, civil societies, members of the Hluttaws, the judicial pillar, the fourth estate media, national race leaders, and the Tatmadaw have been harmoniously taking part in the respective sectors to reach this situation.

The main players in fact are the people or in other words the entire nationalities of Myanmar. This accomplishment will go down into the annals of our chronicles as a new page of history. Our country has paved the way for a new democratic Myanmar amidst international observers. We must continue to walk on this path paved by all the countrymen in harmony and unison. Our democracy will become firmer and firmer if we walk on this path with the resolve that there is no turning back while setting aside differences and working together on common ground.

Mr. Speaker,

Since its assumption of State duties, our government has made efforts to fulfill the two main wishes of the entire people. The first wish of the people is to live in peace and stability.

With this public wish in the fore, we have been giving priority to political process for national reconsolidation and eternal peace. We try to implement the “all-inclusive political process” for all the stakeholders to have a place in the process. Nowadays, our political process is showing sound results. We have paved this path with the force of our goodwill and conviction to keep in fore public interest in line with the wish of the entire people. We are happy to see all the internal political forces trying with eagerness to become people’s representatives practicing democracy within the framework of the Constitution.

We have already granted amnesty to over 28,000 prisoners during our first-year term with the aim of ensuring all-inclusive opportunity in national reconsolidation and nationbuilding tasks. It is a new record in terms of the number of amnesties granted in a year.

Frankly speaking, we granted amnesty for two times in January alone for all to take part in the coming by-elections. As we have welcomed back Myanmar expatriates living abroad for various reasons, we now witness with pleasure the eager participation and assistance of overseas Myanmarers from various parts of the world. Truly, we need a strong force of new political generation for a mature democracy. The need to build the nation through harmonious efforts by all new and old generations after finding a common ground has direct relevance to the future of the nation and entire people.

The participation of our brethren demanding rights throughout the past successive eras in our all inclusive political process is the most important thing. As we are a Union, the participation of all national races in this process on equal terms is a must. Actually such an opportunity is a never-come-true dream and a fade-away hope of our national brethren throughout the past successive eras. We need to end misunderstandings and doubts that appear due to lack of close relations among us. Like all other national races such as Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan, Bamar is also one of the nationalities of the Union. The aspiration of the national races to share the rights among all and enjoy equality is also the desire of our government. Let me take this opportunity to recount the words a national race leader said recently. He said, “18- or 19-year old armed youths told me they too wanted to use laptops and computers”.

I was really disheartened to hear that. So, I have made a firm commitment to end all suspicions and anxieties during our tenure. And this is the conviction of our government.

We have the duty to heal the bitter wounds and sufferings and fulfill the lost dreams. It is the historic duty for all of us. We understand that it is a demanding task. But we have full confidence to shoulder this duty well. After making contacts with national races leaders our confidence grows stronger.

In truth, trust is a vitally important factor in our national reconsolidation process. Sincerely, we will make no deception in our stride to the goal of eternal peace. We will do the job with trust based on Panglong spirit. Questions about Kachin groups are coming from home and abroad.

The people would also like to know about this matter. The question here is why the ceasefire cannot be in force even though I myself have ordered the Armed Forces to terminate all military offensives or attacks other than self-defence purposes. The Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services has already relayed my order to all the troops under his command. Orders and directives are the lifeblood of the Armed Forces. The remaining skirmishes will not end just by pointing a finger at one another. First both sides should cease all hostilities to start a political dialogue. There must be mutual assurances and pledges to end all hostilities. It is the duty of our government and the Kachin leaders to fulfill the aspirations and hopes of the people. We have been providing aids and carrying out rehabilitation arrangements for local war victims and paving the way for domestic, foreign and international organizations to render assistance.

Our government has adopted three steps to realize eternal peace. The first step is to hold the dialogue at state level. In this level both sides must stop all hostilities, stay only at the agreed areas, not to hold any arms in other places except from those agreed areas, open liaison offices in the mutually agreed places, and fix the venue, time and date for Union level dialogue. No political dialogue is included in this level. A sincere and genuine wish for peace is the only requirement to complete this level. The scope of the level is just to make an agreement for dialogue after terminating all hostilities.

Second step is the Union level. The points to be discussed at this step are to secede from the Union by no means, accept Our Three Main National Causes, cooperate in economic development tasks, cooperate in elimination of narcotic drugs, take part in political process following setting up of political parties, discuss at length with other national races at Hluttaw and amend the constitution, and coordinate existence of only a single armed force in accord with the constitution. After both sides reach agreement, we will enter third step.

At the third step, agreement will be signed at the Hluttaw comprising all main political players like the government, national race leaders, political parties and political forces and people's representatives. We must make resolution wholeheartedly to keep undying peace in the Hluttaw. In doing so, we need to bring peace in order that the government, national races and all citizens can achieve a goal by way of three pillars-mutual understanding, equality and development. It is required to amend the constitution by common consent so as to address our needs.

The three steps are the roadmap of the State to ensure eternal peace. This roadmap will entail such many strategies as infrastructures, economic opportunities, industrial zones, resettlement and rehabilitation measures, and social structures as education and health. It is compulsory for national race leaders, political parties, people's representatives and civil society organizations to stand united with our government until national races under the shade of peace can stand tall. We all must try our hardest to see national races youths, who had brandished guns, using laptops. By inviting local and foreign investments and welcoming assistance, we must fulfill their requirements from every conceivable angle. Our Union, home to over one hundred national races, must promote the characteristics of diversity with honour in line with the equality which is the standpoint of our government.

Our government as elected by the people has been carrying out bounden duty of national reconsolidation aspired by all national people. It was not because of push and pressure of any person and any organization, but the desire of our people.

Mr Speaker,

The bottom line process along with eternal peace is to develop the Myanmar economy most quickly. The second wish of the people is for our nation to develop with strong economy. In the time of our government, reform measures are being taken for macro-economy by laying down short- and long-term projects so that a market economic system suitable to the nation's prevailing conditions can emerge clearly.

When the global economy is still instable, when our nation has not had the economic sanctions lifted and when our domestic businesses have not been strong enough with lack of competitiveness, we have had to prioritize the prompt issuance of work business licenses and export/import licenses with a view to enabling our citizens to do business easily and conveniently. We relaxed export-related taxes. The new exchange rate of foreign currencies has been set temporarily according to the outside market situation. At the same time, plans are under way to adopt a durable and strong foreign exchange rate that will do no harm to our citizens in cooperation and coordination with local and foreign experts as well as international monetary organizations. In wiping out barriers to the administrative mechanism so as to reduce unnecessary costs and expenditures, we have given permission to export rice freely and taken measures to significantly reduce prices of fuels, telephones and cars. Similarly, we are taking steps to reduce transactional costs. As regards the matter of mobile phone, which is the most interesting issue among the people, we will seek best ways and means to fulfill the wishes of the people. We are making plans to amend and pass laws for the proper evolution of market economy. In order to reduce transport charges in the long run, we will take action to reduce car prices in parallel with those of the international community.

While encouraging the promotion of the private sector in economy, we are conducting institutional reforms for capacity-building of state-owned businesses. Changes and reforms are also taking place in collaboration with international organizations for the flourishing of capital market and financial market as well as for the emergence of conglomerates. In addition, we are encouraging private banks to be economically strong, and light and medium industries to acquire capital and technologies. We will make our continued efforts to reduce the monopolization of public services and to make sure every citizen has the right to enjoy those services. We are taking measures with care and consideration to ensure that privatization is not in the hands of only a handful of people and that there are no inequality and no barrier to capacity-building.

For the emergence of transparent and predictable firms, we are adopting projects that can facilitate business transactions and promote competency. We are indeed promoting the role of private sector seeking valuable advice and suggestions from local and foreign experts in the economic field. The national development strategy of our government is not aimed at developing a class or a community but aimed at developing every aspect of all walks of life, all classes or all the people of the Myanmar polity. We are doing so not only to develop our GDP but also to improve the people's living standards, the public services like education, health and security and to make sure that the natural environment is not affected by development. While trying to increase the population of middle class that plays a key role in national development, we are creating a sound economic environment by inviting technical know-how, capital investment, expertise and management at home and abroad in order to improve per capita income of the grassroots, create more job opportunities and develop the whole national economic structure in various sectors such as agriculture, industry and service.

Mr Speaker,

All the dignitaries including me, the two vice-presidents, Tatmadaw leaders, union ministers, state/region chief ministers, state/region government members and those responsible for legislative and judicial pillars have a sense of oneness to serve the best interests of the nation and the people. We have

also known that we are facing various criticisms from various places. We have heard some rumours with negative attitude. As said by some others, our government is not divided into a hard-line camp and soft-line camp. Apart from different aspects of management depending on gene, habit and character of individuals, we are all doing our best with confidence adhering to the policy of our government. At a time when we are in transition to a new era and new system and we are developing the whole society of Myanmar into a democratic one, it is important for the government to be strong. The government shouldering the duty of transition needs to take reform measures step by step in a united and stable manner. So, we need to make sure that the road to our reform process is strong and subtle. Now, we are trying to reduce unnecessary procedures of our cabinet meetings and waste of time as little as possible so as to promote the interests of our nation and people. Government ministries and organizations and state/region governments are to put all their energy into providing public services for the people's satisfaction and happiness by trying not to waste time holding series of meetings. The corruption rooted in successive eras as a national challenge had been conceived through eras and systems.

In this time of system change, we are taking educative measures and persuasion, giving warnings and take action with all possible approaches to morality, conviction, ethics, worksite welfare, monitoring, law, principle and procedures. The restructuring of the administrative mechanism down to ward/village level calls for firm rules and laws that can remove the thorns of successive eras. With the system change and era alongside subtle work plans, corruption and bribery will die down. Thus, we are taking time to restructure our administrative mechanism.

We will try to increase salaries and allowances at a right time depending on our macro-economic situations such as our current financial situation, foreign debts and deficits. Since taking office, our government members did not accept high salaries and have been taking the same salary rates of the previous government.

When our nation still has class disparity, widening rich-poor gap and low per capita income, I would like to say that we, civil servants, need to shoulder our duties with goodwill and patience in order to fully provide public services and reduce the burden of extra costs and expenditures.

As the number of service personnel accounts for only 3.3 percent of the nation's total population, we have to consider the 96.7% of the population who are just ordinary wage earners. Now that there are discussions of pay rises, commodity prices have skyrocketed suddenly.

As our civil servants can enjoy better living conditions due to increased salaries, the 58 million of people who are not government employees will face the consequences for sure. As we are not in a position to prioritize our own mechanism alone, we will have to take all-round consideration in taking steps to increase salaries and allowances.

Since taking office, our government has been putting on the priority list the people from rural areas and in the agricultural field. As this duty is easier said than done, we are trying with a new approach to government-private cooperation. Despite knowing that it is not easy to fight poverty quickly in a short time, we are striving to reduce poverty rate of our nation from 26% to 16% in 2015 and remove our nation from the list of least-developed countries in accord with the MDG of the UN with the help of local and international private organizations, NGOs and INGOs so that our needy people can live with dignity through assistance, job opportunities and health and social security benefits. For the health care of those needy people, we are planning to adopt a universal health insurance system in collaboration with private organizations.

In order to create jobs outside the agriculture sector, we are taking measures to develop more industries relying on regional conditions by including industrial planning in the national development projects. In those projects, we are trying to include the future development of our young national people who will be reunited according to our national reconsolidation process.

In increasing taxes necessarily in the short term, we are taking measures with care and consideration in order not to affect the people's socio-economy whilst we are acting with good governance so as to mend defects and weaknesses of the State.

But in the long term, we will try to pass a new tax law that can not only guarantee equality and fairness but also cause no burden to our low-income people. And that new law will make all the citizens including the President pay taxes.

Industrial zones are being established across the nation to create more job opportunities. Moreover, our government is planning to make sure that local and foreign investments flow rapidly to the country and to firmly protect those investments.

While building a democratic society, we need to reform our political and economic processes at the same time.

We are also striving for harmonious development of human resources, an essential prerequisite for emergence of a democratic society and development of national economy. For reforming educational institutions like universities and schools, reform measures are being taken not only for school curriculums and syllabuses but for management sector in accord with the new system.

Although every college and university will be under the control of the ministry concerned, plans will be made for them to operate under their self control one day. Every basic education school must have its own library.

Similarly, all colleges and universities need to have online libraries connected to accredited international universities in addition to their traditional libraries. Our government, which is doing the job based on knowledge-oriented economy, has to constantly promote the quality of our teachers and schools with the help of international universities. We are also setting up Internet networks and telecommunication networks so as to wipe out our digital divide in this age of technology and knowledge.

For national development, we have earmarked money to increase spending of the health sector by fourfold and that of the education sector by twofold in the coming financial year. With subtle reformation process plus increased State fund, we will encourage more development of human resources.

In the time of our government, new policies have been adopted to substitute natural resource extraction-based foreign investment with production-based foreign investment and we are seeking assistance from local and foreign technicians and experts.

While trying to build strong macro-economy, we are laying down short- and long-term projects that are filled with basic infrastructures, human resources, skilled workforce, high technology, environmental conservation, legal organizational structure, competent economic area and improved private participation.

Our government is shouldering three major duties— nation's transition, building of a new nation and improvement of the whole Myanmar society.

Our government is striving for national development with three basic policies that is to say our national development must be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. In doing so, we have opened the door to investment and assistance from inside and outside of the country.

Investment and assistance of one dollar in Myanmar by the international community amounts to contribution of one dollar for the flourishing of democracy and the interests of Myanmar people. So, the international community is urged to extend a helping hand to Myanmar with in-depth

understandings of actual conditions so that our country with democracy still in its infancy will not collapse.

Mr Speaker,

The consolidation of Civil Society Organizations is the most important thing in the process of democratic transition and nation building endeavors. According to Myanmar culture, our national races have the philanthropic spirit deeplyrooted in Myanmar society under the influence of religious teachings. It is very heartening to see emergence of the Civil Society Organizations with momentum from social works to emergency rescues and in the fields of economy, development and environmental conservation. Systematic emergence of foundations and organizations is a pride for our society.

These Civil Society Organizations play an important role in flourishing and strengthening of Myanmar democracy system.

Plans are underway for emergence of class unions and organizations that can protect the rights of farmers and workers. National Human Rights Commission was systematically set up in order to provide effective protection to fundamental rights of citizens in our society.

Formation of National Press Council is under way in order that media sector, the fourth estate, can ensure liberty and accountability with the check and balance system in accord with the democratic practices.

At the same time, our country has lagged behind in globalization. In our attempt to make more integration with global nations, we need to try not to lose Myanmar values- culture, tradition, customs, fine arts, theatrical arts, literature and music of all our national races-which our forefathers have been keeping to further strengthen the soft power that prevails in Myanmar values.

In its attempt to make integrations with the globe along with the new system, CSOs, playing an important role in promoting the standards of films, music and theatrical arts which can symbolize Myanmar values, are trying to highlight and keep the Myanmar values. Mr speaker, Three powers have been equally shared in the Constitution which is a charter framework of democratic transition. After practicing these powers equally, the media sector which is fourth estate and our government, people and the Tatmadaw which form fifth estate, are to march towards the democratic transition with full understanding and trust. Only then, would our country become a modern, developed and democratic one we all want. Rule of law is at the core for emergence of a glorious democratic society. Our respective Hluttaws have prescribed laws, our government rules the country in accord with these laws and judicial pillar is to stick to these laws. Rule of law is a must for our administrative mechanism, businesses, social welfare, political processes, international relations and judicial system. If rule of law prevails in our society, human rights, liberty and democracy would flourish automatically.

Consolidation of every step of national building endeavors depends on rule of law. So, we all are to serve that duty in unison and in concert.

At the same time, our Myanmar society needs to change our mindsets and behaviors in line with the democratic practices. The old thoughts, ideas and behaviors would gradually disappear with the check and balance system if all believe that the country's era and system have changed.

To change the mindsets and behaviors of the whole society through rule of law, we need the support of CSOs.

Cooperation of national brethren with equal-minded senses is crucial. In addition, encouragements and supports of global countries are of great importance.

Our government will make cordial and friendly cooperation in the developing international arena.

In our effort to serve and promote the national interests of our country and people, we will stick to the independent and active foreign policy that has been exercised throughout successive eras. In making our continued effort for the political, economic and social reforms with added momentum, we will maintain amity regardless of East or West as well as extending a warm welcome to international support, cooperation, investment and aids. At the same time, we will constantly safeguard the national interests of our country and people and the country's sovereignty.

Mr Speaker, In conclusion, our government is now serving the duties entrusted by the people after sharing powers with a sense of responsibility and accountability between the upper and lower levels. We had to face a lot of difficulties and challenges over the year. The most important thing in building up a new government is to see our rapid changes and reforms. The consolidation of these changes and reforms is of special importance. Our country has lagged behind in the globalization current. So, we need to carry out anything after taking lessons of home and abroad.

Our respective pillars and societies are to be well aware of challenges that come along with opportunities at a time when our country opens door to the globe. Our historic transitional process is so enormous and difficult. In addition to the challenges that the countries in transition like our country have to face, we need to root out the evil legacies deeply-entrenched in our society. To ensure more consolidation of it, continued efforts are to be made by our people and our society, not only in the time of our government but also the coming successive governments. We need to put more efforts into it. We need to try harder to increase capacity of our mechanism, to expand legislation of the respective Hluttaws, to ensure more consolidation of rule of law, to promote the private sectors' capacity, to increase the number of CSOs, improve the quality of basic infrastructures and social security schemes and promote the living standards of our people.

Our government will continue to try harder till a Myanmar society where the rule of law is firm and people living with peace of mind and dignity is emerged in our democratic country enjoying increased per capita income and well-rounded development in addition to economic growth, which are the wants and wishes of people. I would like to urge the remaining pillars to extend a helping hand to our government for more consolidation by means of mutual understanding, trust and cooperation, and people are also urged to steer our government and all stakeholders to consolidate our society. Our government continues putting more efforts into it in order that our reforms can bring about tangible outcomes in a short period of time, which our people want. For the time being, even though our government has yet to fulfill all the needs of our people, here I would like to reaffirm to our commitment to serving the interests of our people and country with all-out effort even by sacrificing our lives.

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