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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concludes 9th session

THE Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw ninth regular session held its 23rd day meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday and a report on the current work of the government by U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor, was on the top of the agenda.

The report of Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe, on behalf of the Union Government, was documented by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

(Below is the full text of the report.)

In yesterday's meeting, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also approved the forest bill and the Union taxation bill-2018-2019, after scrutinizing them paragraph by paragraph.

Hluttaw gives nod to US\$ 298.9 million loan from ADB for electrification project

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also passed a motion to accept a loan of US\$ 298.9 million from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to be used in implementing the power supply network project of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy.

In the debate, Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr Tun Naing said the ministry is implementing the 19 projects to be able to satisfy a higher demand for electricity in the future, adding that US\$10.48 million will be spent on hiring a consultant for the project and US\$38.6 million for unexpected expenditures.

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Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concluding its ninth regular session in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Report on the current work of the government: political, economic and social development, and the peace process

Following is the full text of the report delivered by Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe during the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting yesterday:



Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe.

SPEAKER of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and all members of Parliament, I wish you all good health, wealth and prosperity.

In accordance with Article 228(B) of the 2008 Constitution, and the invitation dated 3 September 2018, I present this report on the work of the elected government to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Now is the time to reconstruct the nation to make it a peaceful, stable and strong one.

At the same time, effort is being exerted to build up a Union in which the justice, freedom and equality aspired since attainment of independence will prevail. In addition to the prevalence of natural justice, equal rights in respect of political, economic and social justice shall prevail. The Union we are building shall be one which is pure in ideology and which is cherished by all.

Additionally, efforts are also being taken to develop our dem-

ocratic transition into a mature democracy. In fact, these three processes are not to be implemented separately, but all together. This is what the government would like to emphasise.

Speaker and all members of Parliament,

In the process of establishing a peaceful, prosperous and resilient nation, we must take account of the need to strengthen the mechanisms and insti-

tutions of government. It is of paramount importance to uphold rule of law, ensure the mental and physical wellbeing of our citizens, provide for equality of taxation, deliver basic services to our people, including education, health and social services, transportation, communication and infrastructure development, and to strengthen the administrative mechanisms of government.

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Under the project, the 230 KV power-line linking Mawlamyine and Dawei passing through Ye, power stations in Ye and Dawei will be implemented. The Mawlamyine-Ye-Dawei power line will be over 177 miles long, according to the Deputy Minister.

Upon completion of the project, about 470 villages in Ye Township and Dawei District in Taninthayi Region would get access to electricity distributed by the ministry.

Besides, over 400,000 families in Mon State and Taninthayi Region will get access to electricity, said the deputy minister.

Work on building the Mawlamyine-Ye-Dawei power line and sub-power station is expected to be carried out in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

During the debate, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win said the suspension period for the ADB loan is eight years and the debt payment period is 24 years.

The interest rate is one per



Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat. PHOTO: MNA

cent during the suspension period and 1.5 per cent during the repayment period, according to the deputy minister.

"The Ministry of Planning and Finance will carry out the process of getting loan, including negotiation, signing loan, activation of the loan and getting the loan, in accordance with the rules and regulations, and will try to timely complete the

process," said Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win.

Following the debate, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the motion.

Union taxation bill 2018-2019

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the Union taxation bill 2018-2019, after the bill with remarks by the Joint Bill Commit-

tee was scrutinized, paragraph by paragraph by MPs.

Yesterday's meeting was the last day meeting of the ninth regular session of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

In his conclusion remarks, Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat said the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the National Planning Bill, the Union Budget Bill and the Union Taxation Bill during the ninth session of the parliament.

The efforts of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in the ninth regular session aimed at preventing wastage from the public fund, encouraging investment and increasing revenue for the country, while easing the burden of the tax papers, said the Speaker.

A total of five bills were approved in the ninth regular session of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The achievements of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw during the session include the appointment of the Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, seeking approval for Part-II of the Union Accord gained from the Union Peace Conference-21st Century

Panglong, approval of two signings of Myanmar into international organizations and putting the two issues of emergency fund on record.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also discussed and documented the three reports and completed five issues of getting loans from international organizations.

The Speaker also urged the MPs from regions and states to submit proposals for development funds allocated by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, not later than December this year.—Myo Myint, Aung Ye Thwin ■



U Maung Maung Win.

UK Foreign Secretary arrives in Myanmar, visits AAPP



British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP poses for a documentary photo with AAPP secretary U Teit Naing in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

A DELEGATION led by the British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP, landed in Yangon at 3:45pm yesterday.

The delegation was wel-

comed by Daw Kay Thi Soe, Director General of the Strategic Studies and Training Department, British Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Daniel Patrick Brendon Chugg, and other officials at

the Yangon International Airport.

The British Foreign Secretary and his delegation travelled to the extended Ward 33 in Dagon Myothit (North) Township at 5pm yesterday to observe the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) located there.

The British Foreign Secretary was first given a guided tour by AAPP secretary U Teit Naing of the AAPP's exhibition titled 'Memory of the Past'. He then met with AAPP officials and discussed about the state of political prisoners and the status of human rights.

Present at the meeting were AAPP secretary U Teit Naing, joint-secretary U Bo Kyi, in-charge U Aung Myo Kyaw, Yangon Region Hluttaw MP Daw Sandar Min, and Ma Thidar (Sanchaung). —MNA ■

Japanese Ambassador meets SWRR Union Minister



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye shakes hands with Japanese Ambassador Mr. Ichiro Maruyama. PHOTO: MNA

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye received Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Ichiro Maruyama at the Maykalar Hall in his ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they openly discussed the status of constructing houses in northern Rakhine State with support from the Japanese Government,

closing down displaced people camps in Sittway, ensuring displaced people have appropriate livelihoods, assuring cooperation between local residents, the displaced people, humanitarian organizations, the regional government and UN organizations in the resettlement processes, and cooperation with UNHCR in repatriating displaced people who fled to Bangladesh. —MNA

Report on the current work of the government: political, economic and social development, and the peace process

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In order to achieve these aims, it is important that we create opportunities for citizens from across the country to participate in these endeavours. We urge all our citizens to cooperate together with the government.

We have witnessed the cooperation of government, civil society organisations and citizens both during the peace process and holding 21st Century Panglong Conferences, as well as in the course of adapting and creating new government policies.

Speaker and all members of Parliament,

The government is undertaking to establish a Union for the benefit of all its citizens, however, there are still many challenges to overcome to ensure our successful transition to democracy.

As the government has anticipated, the 2008 Constitution should be amended step-by-step, to guarantee the smooth transition. Similarly, the Democratic Federal Union can only be implemented if we can build freedom, equality and mutual respect amongst the ethnic people.

With this in mind, the current government has made the peace process a top priority. With the peace process at the centre, national reconciliation can be also achieved, and this, shall lead to democratic transition and the establishment of the Union.

The main goal of the current peace process is to reach political agreements, to sign the Union Accord, and to implement steps for establishing a Union based on democracy and federalism. In doing so, common approaches will be agreed through the process of holding political dialogue.

The role of military in the peace process is also very crucial. We need to overcome many challenges harmoniously during the peace process.

Establishing the federal Union and achieving the democratic standards anticipated by the government will take time and can only be done step by step. However, our ultimate goal to establish a democratic federal Union is unwavering. In order to bring about a political agreement, the 21st Century Panglong (Union Peace Conference) has already been held three times. As of now, 51 political agreements have been agreed. The government has reiterated its commitment

to establish a Union based on democracy and federalism which has been continuously requested by the ethnic people.

At the second meeting of the 21st Century Panglong (Union Peace Conference), an agreement was in fact reached on matters regarding the right to self-determination and the formulation of state constitutions. However, after reaching agreement, this had to be set aside. Just as non-secession is important, it is equally important to join hands together to build up a federal Union.

Speaker and all members of Parliament,

While the government is working to establish peace, stability and a democratic federal Union, there are many challenges. For over 70 years, previous governments have been trying to resolve the issues in Rakhine State, which have been smouldering in the background. This is the reason why the transition to democracy has been slow, as the current government is trying to take care of the Rakhine issue first.

Since the ARSA attacks in October 2016, the situation has been unstable. The issues reignited in August 2017 when 30 border police outposts and a military headquarters were attacked by ARSA. Due to the terrorist attacks, a significant number of people fled over to neighbouring Bangladesh, and as a consequence, Myanmar was blamed in the international arena.

The necessary arrangements for repatriation, relief and resettlement have now been undertaken in accordance with the bilateral arrangement signed by Myanmar and Bangladesh on 23 November 2017.

The Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE)

The Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) consisting of two well-known international personalities and two local experts was established in accordance with the law. This Commission is tasked to investigate allegations of human rights violations and the related issues of terrorist attacks. There will be cooperation and collaboration among relevant departments and organisations, the security forces and the ICOE.

We are capable of handling our national affairs not only by utilising our sovereign power, but

also by being able and willing to do so.

Myanmar respects the sovereignty and dignity of each individual nation, and therefore it will continuously work towards fostering closer friendships that will contribute towards global peace and the improvement of international relations. In this regard, it is also crucial to follow international laws and agreements.

In order to handle the Rakhine issue, peaceful coexistence through diversity will be implemented. However, if mind-sets and perspectives remain the same as when the conflicts and tension occurred, we will not be able to resolve these issues.

Thus, the issue should be addressed with a new approach, taking into consideration regional and international perspectives, in accordance with 21st century globalisation. We will only be able to overcome the unfair challenges and pressures with the unity of our citizens.

The Rakhine situation is a very complex and sensitive issue.

The government would like to express its gratitude to the public for its understanding, trust and support during this difficult and stressful period as it is trying its utmost for the future development of the nation.

In its nation building endeavour, the government continues to strive to amend laws that are no longer agreeable to democratic values and accepted human rights standards.

The Union Government aims to institute the rule of law, through the development and promulgation of laws, rules and regulations, law enforcement, and the administration of justice through the legal system to promote good governance.

The Union Government has put great efforts into enhancing the ability of the youth to think critically and philosophically, by providing more access to libraries and research, so that a new generation of highly educated youth can be produced.

Better access to educational opportunities

In order for the new generation to have better access to educational opportunities, better and higher school attendance levels and to lower the rates of school leaving, the union government has upgraded 6,386 schools.

10,732 primary school teachers, 383 middle school teachers

and 1,221 high school teachers have been appointed. A total of 4,799 buildings comprising 4,585 school halls and 214 staff accommodations were built.

Text books, exercise books and school uniforms have been distributed to government and monastic schools, free of charge. Pre-schools and primary school syllabuses were changed and 81 non-formal education programs, introduced.

In order to ensure greater job opportunities, the government training and vocational institutions have been further strengthened in Insein, Pyin-Oo-Lwin and Kyaitlatt. In addition, the Singapore- Myanmar Vocational Training Institute (SMV-TI), the Nyaung Shwe Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) and the Nay Pyi Taw English Proficiency Training School were further introduced.

Similarly, before 2021, the government will open 36 technical institutes, government technical high-schools and vocational training schools, along with an increase of 2,933 teachers. Two-year educational colleges will be advanced to four-year degree colleges.

During the last three financial years, the education budget has been gradually increased. In the 2016/17 financial year, the budget was 1,726 billion Kyat; in the 2017/18 financial year, the education budget was 1,756 billion Kyat; and in the 2018/19 financial year, there will be an increase to 2,175 billion Kyat in expenditure.

An increase in the health budget

Similarly, in the health budget, there has been an increase. In the 2016/17 financial year, the budget was 881 billion Kyat; in the 2017/18 financial year, the budget was 1,076 billion Kyat; and in the coming 2018/19 financial year budget, the expenditure will be increased to 1,131 billion kyats.

Together with the increase of budget in the health sector, health care services have also been increased. A new 16-bed regional hospital, 18 rural health clinics, 20 rural sub-clinics, and 16 traditional medicine hospitals were newly built and 7 hospitals also received upgrades. A total of 22,421 doctors, nurses, midwives, health workers, dental experts and health workers were also newly appointed.

The building of 3,644 health-

care staff quarters were also completed. Public health clinics were also opened in rural areas. This helped the early detection of diabetes, hypertension, etc. so that effective health care can be given in the early stages.

Work on the eradication of malaria is being conducted. 64,060 chronic disease patients suffering from TB and 156,372 patients suffering from HIV were being given health care. In order to give better health education, health care workers and health service staff were provided with mobile tablets to assist them with "e-Education, e-Consultation and e-Medicine."

Medical student enrolment from remote regions has increased from 3% to 6%. In 2016/17, 59 students were accepted. In 2017/2018, 81 students were accepted. There was also an increase in post-graduate studies in 10 disciplines and there are now 126 disciplines of post-graduate studies.

In terms of human resources, 3,952 doctors, 492 dentists, 1,121 health workers, 4,143 nurses, 2,550 midwives, 299 women health workers, 529 post graduate diploma holders, 529 masters degree holders, 1,581 Master of Science degree holders and 220 PhDs were produced. During the tenure of the new government, funds were made available for medical research, and advances in medical research projects were achieved.

We acknowledge the role of the Hluttaw Representatives in making possible a notable improvement in the education and health budget, thus allowing the government to realize a future generation that is healthier and better educated. The government also holds seriously its accountability to expending the nation's budget.

Sufficient and good infrastructures are mainly required for building a nation. 67 numbers of over 180-foot bridges, 218 numbers of bridges between 180 and 50 feet that are 285 numbers of bridges in total have been constructed across the country in the past two years. It is planned to complete the construction of Thayet-Aunglan Ayeyarwaddy bridge in the third year. It is also planned to complete the construction of over 400 bridges needed by the people across the country.

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Apart from the construction works by Ministry of Construction, 144 Union roads were upgraded with the assistance of the ADB, the World Bank, JICA, KfW of Germany. Of them, 333 miles of concrete road, 358 miles of tar road and 1,030 miles of nylon-tar road were upgraded.

Besides, the ministry upgraded 2,916 miles of road in total and 1,940 bridges in rural areas as part of efforts for providing the rural people with smooth transportation. The Ministry of Construction would upgrade roads in rural areas every year, setting its target of turning the roads to all-weather roads to be accessed by 80 per cent of the villages and 90 per cent of the rural population of the country.

Urban projects and industrial cities

Urban projects and industrial cities are being developed in some big cities like Yangon and Mandalay within 3 years for systematic development of urban housing.

Economic growth is expected to accelerate by having businessmen participate in these mega projects. The development of these mega projects will create job opportunities and have multiplier effects in the economy. These effects will drive the economy and positively influence on the national GDP.

The role of active young entrepreneurs has become important among today's businessmen. The government has been supporting to have more young entrepreneurs emerged. These young businessmen are the future of Myanmar's business environment. More businesses at the international level will emerge by supporting and nurturing them.

Negotiations have been made in cooperation with the IFC of the World Bank Group for the development of Yangon elevated road project in coming 2019 with a view to address the traffic issues in Yangon. Such development is being pursued with the expectation not only to address traffic issues but also to create job opportunities.

Urban development is becoming a challenge for highly populated cities. It is important that

future potential developments are taken into consideration to address these challenges.

During the past 2 years, it was planned to construct 10,924 rooms for public housing and for government employees, among which 57,48 rooms that is 70 percent of the plan are now available. Efforts are being made for timely construction of the rest and in addition, construction of over 10,000 rooms are planned, out of which over 4,000 rooms are to be constructed through different PPP models and over 6,000 rooms are to be constructed by private companies.

Urban projects in 33 cities across the country have been implemented and planning for additional urban projects are being developed in cooperation with the states and regional governments. The Master Plan for Yangon Region, Master Plan for Yangon-Hanthawadi-Bago corridor and Master Plan for Southwest of Yangon have been developed in cooperation with JICA of Japan and KOICA of Korea.

It is important to have higher electricity supply in the process of developing road and transport connectivities, and also developing urban housing and infrastructures. Development of these basic infrastructures could open up business and job opportunities.

Electricity supply increased by 556 MW

During the past two and a half years, electricity supply has increased by 556 MW from 2,802 MW to 3,388 MW. Hence, electricity can be supplied to 33 cities, 3,843 villages and 684,013 households. As the electricity consumption has been rising from 15% to 19% per annum, it will increase up to 4,531 MW in 2020-2021.

In order to meet the electricity demand, efforts are being made to generate 220 MW in 2018, 449 MW in 2018-19, 737 MW in 2019-2020, 1,351 MW in 2020-2021 that are 2,757 MW in total.

The natural gas production may gradually decline as the production from Yadana project has reached a plateau level. Offshore national gas exploration and onshore oil exploration are being expanded to mitigate the effect of gradual national gas production decline.

Drilling of deep and shallow wells are being conducted in the

sea near Rakhine, Ayeyarwaddy and Taninthayi coastal areas. Currently, prospects are observed in A-6 off the Ayeyarwaddy coast. Once the estimated reserves have been confirmed, official announcement would be made. Tender proposals will be solicited to international companies for the exploration of onshore and offshore blocks.

Agricultural sector depended on by the majority of population has become an important foundation in developing basic infrastructures for the nation building. To strengthen the important economic foundation, to have farmers' families benefited from their own farming, and to have the generations of farmers possess the right to their farm land, the 2012 Law on Farm Land and 2012 Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law have been amended to reflect the actual onground situation.

Encountering natural disasters on a regular basis

Along with the environmental degradation around the world, Myanmar has been encountering natural disasters on a regular basis due to climate change and losses are encountered on the annual basis.

During the period under the existing government, Disaster Risk Management Committee and Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement have spent Kyats 2.4 billion and Kyats 11.330 billion respectively that are Kyats 13.739 billion in total for the support and rehabilitation activities in the disaster areas.

To avoid difficulty in access to agricultural and drinking water in the dry zone and coastal areas, plans are being made for effective storage of rain water.

Thanks to renovation and maintenance of reservoirs and irrigation system, about 1.23 million acres of rice received irrigation water sufficiently in this rainy season and about 1.167 million acres of rice were supplied with irrigation water from the reservoirs and dams. Besides, this year saw further 260,000 acres of rice in summer while about 1,500 tube-wells were drilled for agricultural purpose and about 400 tube-wells for supply drinking water.

To be able to adapt to climate

change impacts on agriculture, to improve timeliness agricultural production and to minimize the loss and wastages in the sector, we believe that the use of farm machinery should be increased. Therefore, plans are underway to promote the use of agricultural machinery. Today, about 75 per cent of the cultivation were operated by mechanization from ploughing to harvesting.

The incumbent government has released a total of 63,417 acres of confiscated farmland so far and returned 13,091 acres to farmers and 50,326 acres to ministries and regions and states.

To accelerate the country's economy based on the agricultural sector and to boost the agricultural products, the Union Government laid down the national export strategy, practicing all possible means and ways to get the export market for Myanmar's products.

Regarding the export sector, efforts are being made to produce value-added products from rice, peas and pulses, fish, textile, woods and rubber. Besides, the Union Government has stepped up its efforts for promoting transport, quality of export products, availability of information on trade and financial services. Today, Myanmar's export is relying on agricultural sector, fishery and livestock sector, and private small and medium enterprises.

Local production sector facing challenges

Meanwhile, local production sector is facing challenges, such as getting quality seeds, shortage of machinery in production, fertilizer, systematic use of pesticides, shortage of skilled laborers. To be able to provide the people with safety and nutritious food, efforts are being made to promote organic crops production and high-quality products. It is found that the special challenges for our SMEs are capital, technology and market penetration.

Government borrows ODA from JICA as two-step loans for SMEs in order to fulfill the need for finance and Kyats 60 billion loans has been extended to SMEs within 3 years. It is also planned to extend the loan of additional Kyats 200 billion to the SMEs in 2018-2019. In addition, the State-owned Myanmar Economic Bank also plans to extend the loan amounting to Kyats 250

billion as SME loans.

Similarly, JICA two-step loans amounting to Kyats 200 billion was acquired to support farmers and help them have better access to finance during a transformation process towards mechanized farming and Kyats 30 billion loans has been extended to farmers so far. Myanmar Economic Bank also plans to extend the loans amounting to Kyats 200 billion for agriculture and livestock farming businesses.

Agriculture loans extended by Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank has increased from Kyats 100,000 to Kyats 150,000 per acre for paddy farming. Loans extended for other crops have increased from Kyats 20,000 to Kyats 50,000 per acre and it is planned to further increase up to Kyats 100,000 per acre.

The presence of illegal trades, lower export generated incomes, loss of taxes, depletion of natural resources, illegal importation of consumer products have significant impacts on domestic small and medium sized industries and pose significant challenges exposing risks to consumers. It is planned to have these challenges properly handled in accordance with the Laws.

Trade imbalances exist due to current account deficits as imports are much higher than exports. As US dollar has strengthened significantly since the past April and June, many currencies in the world including Myanmar Kyats are becoming weaker. Although that is a global impact, depreciation of Myanmar Kyats is found to be more significant than those of other countries.

While there are many factors that cause Myanmar Kyat to depreciate, current account deficit, interest rates, inflation and economic prospects are factors among others that mainly influence on the exchange rate.

Analyzing the depreciation of Myanmar Kyat, although it started with the external impacts, the domestic factors that include but are not limited to weak economic fundamentals and structural issues have significant impacts on the exchange rate. Looking at the trade, trade deficit was US\$ 3.8 billion in 2017-18 and it is actually lower than previous years.

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In 2016-2017, trade deficit was US\$ 5.2 billion and it was US\$ 5.4 billion in 2015-2016. It is evident that these deficits have had a lot of pressure on the domestic currency.

Second, changes in seasonal foreign currency demands also have impacts on the exchange rate. Especially during the period from July to December, demands for foreign currency is usually high.

In order to reduce the trade deficit, to strengthen domestic economy and to be resilient and to withstand various impacts, the government has been going through various reform processes in cooperation with the private sector stakeholders.

Government of Myanmar places a lot of effort in enhancing productivity, developing main economic drivers, and creating favorable investment and business climate. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for application of business approvals and permits are being developed and a Single Window system according to which applications can be made and approvals and permits can be received at one place will be developed soon. Now, the new Compa-

nies Law has been enacted and online system through which companies can be incorporated without needing to come to the office has been up and running. Hence, it is projected that Myanmar's Ease of Doing Business ranking will improve in the years ahead.

With the cooperation of private sector and based on the efforts made by relevant government departments, it is planned to improve the ranking of Ease of Doing Business for Myanmar from the current status of 171 to less than 100 in a few years time. It is aimed not only at improving the ranking but also at changing the existing procedures of the government departments, especially to change the current situation of unpopular red-tapes, increased corruptions, and the mismatch between the government's policy objectives and its departments' organization and performance.

Speaker and all members of Parliament,

At the same time, the government has established a four year (2018-2021) strategic plan for anti-corruption reforms and initiatives to reduce the erosion state funds and bring bribery and corruption under control.

The government's plans are now in place to implement the strategic plan for anti-corruption and bribery. At the same time, in order to protect individual rights and the basic rights of citizens, the protection of human rights is being implemented as a matter of great importance.

The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission is ensuring greater understanding, promoting awareness and protection. In police cells and prisons, noticeable improvements in food and accommodation can be seen.

Legal aid for people who cannot afford legal representation

Legal aid for people who cannot afford legal representation has been established. Legal aid is given to citizens who are poor and unable to defend for themselves, such as children, women, the elderly, disabled, and people suffering from communicable diseases.

Similarly, the President's Office has taken direct responsibility of the anti-narcotics taskforce. It is encouraging to see that there has been continuous cooperation from the people in reporting information on drug-related

crimes.

Since the taskforce was established on 27th June 2018, until 17th September 2018, a total of 698 reports were made and 514 of these were investigated, resulting in 174 arrests made. A total of 426 people (356 males and 70 females) were apprehended. A total of 2,626.97 grams of heroin, 16.71 grams of ICE, 34,896.85 grams of opium, 144,781 tablets of amphetamine, 3,356.74 grams of marijuana, 10 assorted arms, 179 assorted ammunitions and 1 hand grenade were confiscated. To date, there have still not been many reports of large-scale drug traffickers received.

Three centres for youth rehabilitation managed by the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control, and 9 centres for rehabilitation managed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement were opened to give assistance, education and treatment programs to people taking mind-altering drugs and other kinds of substances. Assistance and rehabilitation to people suffering both physically and mentally was also given through educational and vocational training.

The Myanmar police force, which plays a vital role in upholding the role of law, has been

enhanced to improve law enforcement. Arms and weapons have been updated, and training schools have been upgraded together with international institutions. Updates were also made to the forensics and DNA lab facilities. Communication equipment has been upgraded. It is understood that for nations going through transition, it takes an average of 10 years for the rule of law to take firm hold.

It is a long-term investment, where dynamic and unremitting motivation is required, if the nation is to live in harmony, peace and security under a strong and firm rule of law.

Speaker and all members of Parliament,

May I conclude by clarifying that the government will exercise the powers vested in them by the people, with the collected efforts of the people, by:

- Ensuring the rule of law and promoting socio-economic development;
- Peace and national reconciliation; and
- Firmly upholding our objective to amend the constitution, which is the basic foundation for building a Democratic Federal Union.

Nepali National Day held in Yangon

UNION Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu and his wife Daw Khin Thidar attended the Nepali National Day celebration held at Melia Hotel yesterday evening.

The celebration was opened with the national anthem of both Myanmar and Nepal.

This was followed by speeches from Nepalese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Bim K. Udas and the Union Minister, after which they proceeded to cut the celebratory cake.

The Union Minister and his wife, the Nepali Ambassador and his wife, then took a documentary photo with the attending guests.

The Ambassador and his wife then entertained the guests with a dinner banquet.

Attending the celebration were foreign ambassadors assuming office in Yangon, charge d'affairs, UN departmental representatives and other invited guests. —MNA ■



Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu delivers a speech at a celebration of the Nepali National Day in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

Low pressure in Bay of Bengal likely to form depression in next 24 hours

THE cyclonic circulation in Bay of Bengal over the East Central Bay of Bengal and adjoining Myanmar Coast still persists and the low pressure is likely to intensify into a depression in the next 24 hours, according to the 6:30 pm observation of the weather bureau yesterday.

With this system in the bay, squalls with rough sea are likely to happen at times off and along Myanmar coasts, said the Meteorology and Hydrology Department.

Surface wind speed in squalls may reach 40 miles per hour and wave height will be about 9 to 12 feet off and along Myanmar coasts.

Fishermen and locals are advised not to venture into the sea.

The forecast of the weather bureau said that rain or thundershowers will be scattered in southern and eastern Shan and Kayah states, fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Bago regions, northern Shan and Chin states and widespread in the remaining regions and states with isolated heavy falls in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi regions, Rakhine and Mon states, with full per cent degree of certainty.—GNLM