

Information Update on Myanmar

(October 2019)

1. UN Day in Myanmar

- (a) President stresses at the Celebration of UN Day that UN activities should be driven by objective needs rather than accommodating wishes of some members

The Seventy-Fourth Anniversary of the United Nations was celebrated in Nay Pyi Taw on 24 October 2019. In the message of President U Win Myint, he reminded of the principles of sovereign equality, impartiality and objectivity vividly enshrined in the UN Charter and stressed the need for the United Nations to ensure that it remains relevant to all nations regardless of their size and power.

The President said, “The United Nations should discharge its mandate and allocate its scarce resources in the most effective manner.” He pointed out that UN’s activities should be driven by objective needs rather than by the desire to accommodate the wishes of particular member countries. “Such polarization will lead to a trust deficit in the international system as is evidenced by the increase in nationalism and populism in recent years. To preserve the integrity of the organization, all of its members must play by the same rules under the UN umbrella. The values of the UN Charter must remain our guide.” , he added.

The President also expressed that cooperation with the United Nations has always ranked high in the tenets of Myanmar’s foreign policy. “As an emerging democracy with numerous domestic challenges, Myanmar reaffirms its commitment to work together with the United Nations in our nation-building efforts” stated in the President’s message.

2. Peace Process

- (a) State Counsellor urges for equality of ethnic people and future assurances to ethnic youths in ethnic regions at the celebration of 4th Anniversary of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

The 4th anniversary of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was celebrated in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 October 2019. In the keynote speech of the Chairperson of National Reconciliation and Peace Center and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the importance of NCA was highlighted as an agreement for national reconciliation, equality and establishment of a federal union. She said that the difficulties Myanmar is facing today are due to the weakness in implementing the NCA. She also pointed out that during the past four years after signing the NCA, there was the least number armed conflicts between the Tatmadaw and EAOs.

The State Counsellor also apprised the ceremony of 3 future peace processes: to ensure a framework agreement on implementing NCA; to discuss and negotiate for additional basic principle points in addition to the agreed 51 basic principle points; to reach a common agreement on stage wise work processes in post 2020 election and priority programs.

She said that without establishing a federal union based on the equity of the ethnic people, Myanmar will not see peace in the country. She underlined the suffering and injuries of grassroots people at the bottom caused by conflicts. She stressed the need to provide future assurances to ethnic youths in ethnic regions while moving towards technology revolution 4.0.

Moreover, she stressed that “achieving sustainable peace would be possible only if a true federal union could be established. Division of power must be in accordance with a federal system. All federal units are equal. States will have a constitution that assures self-determination. Our government accepted as a basic principle that the division of power in States was to be based on the people. It is important for all to participate at a discussion table to establish detailed basic principles.”

The 4th anniversary of NCA was attended by representatives from the Government, Parliament, Military, National Human Rights Commission, political parties, ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), diplomatic missions and international organizations and invited guests. The NCA was signed during the previous administration. Currently, 10 EAOs have signed the NCA.

(b) State Counsellor meets Karen National Union

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as a Chairperson of National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC), met with Karen National Union Chairman Saw Mutu Say Poe and the delegation in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 October 2019. There was exchange of views on how to overcome challenges in the peace making process, making agreements on the frameworks for implementing NCA, plans for peace process beyond 2020 elections, holding Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting, absence of Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) in the celebration of the 4th anniversary of NCA, and plans for lasting peace and national reconciliation.

3. Strengthening Democracy and Human Rights

(a) Amendment process of 2008 Constitution

The Joint Committee of the Union Parliament to amend 2008 Constitution was held 53 meetings until the end of October 2019. The Joint Committee, formed on 19 February

2019, is tasked to amend undemocratic provisions of the constitution in line with democratic norms. Since its inception, the Joint Committee has held the meetings for 53 times.

(b) Myanmar highlights importance of systematic documentation at the UNHCR ExCom

At the 70th session of UNHCR's Executive Committee held in Geneva from 7 to 11 October 2019, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye highlighted that Myanmar is a country that has been seriously affected by irregular migration since colonial times. He mentioned Myanmar's vote for the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and support to "IBelong Campaign" launched by the UNHCR.

He underlined the importance of ending conflict for displacement and systematic documentation. Explaining about the issuance of National verification cards (NVC), he informed several benefits. It is said processing time is shorted to 6 months. He said, Myanmar's new Child Rights Law guarantees the right to register at birth for all children and birth registration is conducted nationwide free of charge with the aim to achieve "no child left behind". Mobile teams are sent to remote areas; pilot projects for the online system are in progress in some States.

The Union Minister informed about the efforts by Myanmar to expedite repatriation of the displaced persons from Rakhine State, the obstacles including destructive movements in the camps to hinder repatriation. He talked about people from Cox's Bazar returning under their own arrangement and on their own volition, people who want to come back including 400 people of Hindu faith.

With regard to the IDPs, he said the recently developed nationwide IDP camps closure Strategy covering Kachin, Shan, Rakhine and Kayin States will be followed by action plans. The action plan will be carefully formulated by taking into account of the local context including the needs and concern of the IDPs and host communities, as well as in line with internationally accepted norms and standards. Consultation will be held widely especially with the IDPs and host communities.

(c) Prevention of conflict-related violations of human rights

During September 2019, continued awareness raising talks on Geneva Conventions, forced labour and underage recruitment were held for military officers, staff and family members in Myanmar.

Myanmar signed a Joint Communiqué with the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict Ms. Pramila Patten on 7 December 2018. It is also cooperating with Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict Ms.

Virginia Gamba to prevent and address conflict-related violations on children including in the area of legal training.

(d) Prevention of hate speech

The section 66 (d) of Myanmar's Telecommunications law 2013, clearly mentions that whoever commits extorting, coercing, restraining wrongfully, defaming, disturbing, causing undue influence or threatening to any person by using any Telecommunications Network shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or to a fine or to both. However, many people still need to have thorough understanding on the ethics in using social media. Myanmar is in the process of drafting the Cyber Law. Hot line centre of Myanmar Police Force has been opened for the complaints regarding the cyber crimes using technology and the necessary actions will be taken by existing communication and electronics acts.

In Myanmar, 90 % of internet users use facebook. The Union Minister for Information met with Facebook Team on 8 December 2016, 13 December 2017 and 5 June 2018 and exchanged the views on tackling the use of hate speech and using social media systematically. To promote awareness of people, awareness campaigns are being held through newspapers, radio and televisions, trainings, talks and seminars across the country.

4. Non-aligned Movement

(a) Union Minister for International Cooperation stresses the need of Bangladesh's cooperation in addressing the issue of killing and threats by ARSA in his Statement at the 18th NAM Summit

At the 18th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held on 26 October 2019 in Baku, Azerbaijan, Union Minister for International Cooperation Mr. Kyaw Tin reaffirms Myanmar's unwavering faith in the fundamental principles of the NAM, particularly respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; refraining from interference in the internal affairs of another country; settlement of disputes by peaceful means; and refraining from acts of aggression or threats or the use of force against any country.

Speaking about the repatriation of displaced persons from Rakhine State, Union Minister stressed that the main obstacle is the killings and threats by ARSA on the displaced persons advocating for or willing to return. Myanmar needs Bangladesh's cooperation to address this issue.

Also at the Preparatory Ministerial Meeting, the Union Minister stressed that the issue of Rakhine is "not an issue of religious persecution" or not an issue of driving an

ethnic group out of the country, as “wrongfully alleged”. He said, “Myanmar strongly objected to the labelling the issue as ethnic cleansing or genocide by Bangladesh.”

He stressed the importance for the two neighbors of working together under the agreed mechanisms and following strictly the signed bilateral arrangement.

In highlighting the presence of hardliner groups and ARSA terror groups inside the camps in the Cox’s Bazaar who do not want repatriation but exert international pressure to advance their political agenda, he urged Bangladesh not to turn a blind eye to their presence in the camps.

5. Recent Developments in Rakhine State and Repatriation Process

(a) Return of displaced persons to Taung Pyo Letwe Reception Centre in Maungtau

Despite threat and killing of ARSA terrorists in the camps in Cox’s Bazar, many displaced persons have returned to Rakhine with their own volition. Up to 1 November 2019, there have been a total of 414 displaced persons returned through Taung Pyo Letwe Reception Centre in Maungtau Township, Rakhine State.

(b) Verification of 22,432 Displaced Persons

At the 3rd Joint Working Group (JWG) Meeting on the Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh held in Dhaka in October 2018, the Bangladeshi side handed over the list of 22,432 displaced persons to the Myanmar delegation.

As of 22 October 2019, Myanmar has verified 20,799 persons, that is, 93 % of the list of 22,432 persons provided by Bangladesh. Among them, 12,805 were verified as former residents; 121 as suspects to be involved in the terrorist attacks; 7,873 as not included in the registered list of family household in Myanmar. The information has already been conveyed to Bangladesh side through the diplomatic channel.

(c) UEHRD celebrates 2nd anniversary

The Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) was first established in 2017 to address conflicts and problems of Rakhine State in collaborative efforts. Now, the work of the UEHRD is aimed for the whole Union.

At the 2nd anniversary of the UEHRD held in Nay Pyi Taw on 18 October 2019, Chairperson of UEHRD State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered a speech by highlighting the importance of self-confidence, self-reliance and problem-solving strength in solving various challenges.

(d) State Counsellor receives ASEAN Secretary-General

State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN, in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 October 2019. They exchanged views on the recent developments in Rakhine State and on the possible areas of collaboration between Myanmar and ASEAN as well as the implementation of the recommendations of Preliminary Needs Assessment conducted by the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN ERAT) to identify possible areas of cooperation between Myanmar and ASEAN to facilitate the repatriation process.

(e) Holding of a coordination meeting among government, Rakhine Coordination Committee, UN agencies

A coordination meeting, chaired by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye, was held among the government, the Rakhine Coordination Committee and UN agencies in Sittway on 27 October 2019. The Rakhine Coordination Committee is helping in the works of UN agencies and international organizations. At the meeting, the representatives from UN Agencies including UNDP and UNHCR, UNOCHA, Red Cross Movement (MRCS, ICRC and IFRC) explained their works and projects in Rakhine to provide food and healthcare services.

(f) Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State conducts a field survey in Rakhine

The Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State conducted a field survey in Rakhine from 29 September to 4 October 2019. The field survey and the findings and reports of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy were discussed at the meeting between the Committed and various Ministries held on 9 October 2019. The meeting discussed matters relating to basic needs for displaced persons as well as shelters, repatriation and resettlement program under the UEHRD program and condition of IDP camps.

(g) Rakhine Peace Committee meets to finalize report

The Committee for Supporting Peace and Stability in Rakhine State (CSPSRS) held a coordination meeting for the compilation of its final report in Nay Pyi Taw on 22 October 2019. The second draft will be edited in the next meeting and then finalize for the submission.

(h) AA armed group abducts 58 in Yathedaung, Rakhine State

The AA armed group abducted 58 service personnel onboard a boat in Yathedaung, Rakhine State on 26 October 2019. The abductees includes 14 members of the Tatmataw,

29 police officers, two service personnel of the Prison Department, two civil servants and 13 civilians. The boat was carrying 165 civilian passengers and about 50 service personnel. After rescue operation, 15 persons fled from the AA armed group. According to a policeman rescued by Tatmadaw, the five abductees including him were tied and shot by small weapons by AA before dropping into water.

(i) Court martial proceedings begin in Gutabyin incident

According to the investigation of the Court of Inquiry, established in accordance with the Defence Services Act, the Defence Services Rules, it was recommended that some incidents in Gutabyin Village should be subject to Court-Martial procedures.

Thus, Court martial procedures have begun in order to proceed in accordance with the Process of Military Justice.

The documentation of the Summary of Evidence is underway and further measures will be taken to seek legal advice, to set up a Court-Martial and to conduct a trial in the Court-Martial. The Court of Inquiry will also continue necessary investigations.

6. Business and Investment

(a) Myanmar's economy will grow 6.6 per cent in 2020

According to the data released by the World Bank, Myanmar's economy is projected to grow by 6.6 percent in 2020 and become one of the fastest growing economies in the Southeast Asia. Its economic growth is expected to further increase to 6.7 percent in 2021 and 6.8 percent in 2022.

(b) Myanmar standing the top 20 improvers list in Doing Business 2020

According to the World Bank forecast, Myanmar is standing among the top 20 improvers list in Doing Business 2020.

In the World Bank's report of the Ease of Doing Business, Myanmar has moved up to 165 from 171 last year. According to the World Bank, Myanmar has implemented five initiatives that enhanced its business environment: strengthening of construction quality control, launching the company registry platform, making property registration faster, publishing performance measurement reports by the courts and strengthening minority investor protections.

(c) Launching of Unicode Standard as a step for e-government

Myanmar launched Myanmar Unicode system with effect from 1 October 2019. The languages of Myanmar ethnic groups such as Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rkazine and Shan can be used in this system. It is an essential step to support the e-government programme for the development of the country. The use of Unicode standard system is an

important stage under the e-Governance Master Plan. Myanmar has seen a 12-point increase in e-Government Development Index from level 169 in 2016 to 157 in 2018. Between 2016 and 2018, 40,000 kilometer of internet fibre cable was set up, 15,000 mobile telecom stations were built. There are over 50 million mobile phone users.

Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar,
Geneva.

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