

## State Counsellor's speech at UEHRD 3rd anniversary celebration

I send my good wishes and greetings to all of you for your good health and well-being.

Today's ceremony is to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of UEHRD which was established after the ARSA attacks of 2017 and the events that followed which brought together the Union Government, entrepreneurs and the people, working as a Union Enterprise to receive the displaced persons who had fled to the other country, to resettle and rehabilitate those who had remained inside the country and for rapid development, and durable peace free from conflicts in the whole of Rakhine State.

Just as it is the duty of all the citizens for a country to develop and achieve peace; at the same time, the government which is providing leadership and administrative services need to undertake necessary organizational processes and programmes to ensure stability and harmonious development of all parts of the country.

Among these initiatives and programmes, the UEHRD committee has been set up specifically for the Rakhine State as a programme and committee.

Our country is a country where diverse ethnic nationalities with different belief systems have lived together in coexistence since the time of our forefathers. We will continue to work to achieve unity based on diversity at all times, continuously. At this time, efforts to bring peace and stability are especially needed in northern Rakhine.

Throughout the past eras, backwardness in development, conflicts and instability have existed as challenges; to deal with these challenges our Union Government formed the Central Committee for Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine State as soon as we took over state responsibility.

Under this Central Committee, we formed four Working Committees for different sectors to strengthen the work of the central committee. The central committee and working committees were organized with personnel from the various government ministries, and they performed the duties of their respective departments.

The UEHRD has been established to perform not only governmental tasks but also to bring together the synergies of entrepreneurs, advice of learned experts, and cooperation and assistance from home and abroad. This is a Union Enterprise established for the development of a particular region with a new form of organizational structure.

From the time of its establishment, UEHRD carried out the tasks of repatriation in accordance with the agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar during the prescribed period. Amidst many constraints, we were able to build two reception camps and one transit camp with the cooperation of the Rakhine State government within the prescribed period of between two to three months for the repatriation process. We were not doing this because we were duty-bound, but we participated and performed this task with enthusiasm with a sense of duty because it was necessary for our country. We need to recognize this fact.

While we were working on the repatriation efforts, we initiated the “UEHRD Youth Volunteers Programme” to provide humanitarian assistance for those within the Rakhine State who needed help, by mobilizing youth volunteers from different parts of the country to distribute food and other necessary supplies.

What I wish to say at this point is that while the older people were participating in different sectors, our youths were also participating and cooperating and performing their share of duties.

When I say ‘UEHRD Committee’, I am referring to its task forces comprising its committee members, businesspersons, professionals and young and middle-aged persons. These task forces were formed under thematic expertise with special focus on respective tasks, making the collective activities of the UEHRD Committee.

The UERHD is implementing its objectives for the effective provision of humanitarian aid, the coordination of resettlement and rehabilitation efforts and the promotion of regional development, and durable peace free from conflicts.

The UEHRD is to be congratulated for being able to implement up to certain extent resettlement and rehabilitation efforts for the displaced persons after scrutiny, and building housings, roads, electricity and providing livelihoods for internally displaced persons.

We also need to thank and acknowledge the Union ministries, the Rakhine State government, businesspersons, the people, friendly countries and international organizations for their cooperation and support.

Especially, the Red Cross Movement has been participating in an ongoing joint project implemented by the Myanmar Red Cross Society, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Moreover, we feel grateful to the World Food Programme for its constant supplies of foodstuffs and relief items before and during COVID-19 crisis for Rakhine State.

In line with its motto of 'One Asean one Response', the ASEAN Secretary-General's office, as well as our partner countries, are providing necessary assistance regularly for matters related to Rakhine State.

Especially, I wish to thank and acknowledge the contributions of Japan, China and India who have provided relief assistance.

At this point, what I want to say is that in any type of endeavour, we are bound to meet difficulties and challenges. No matter how much we wish to work for development and peace and stability in Rakhine, we are always bound to meet obstacles.

Armed conflicts increased while we are implementing the development and stability of Rakhine State. Apart from this, the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has attacked our country, including Rakhine State.

Our people need to adhere to the rules and regulations to overcome these problems. There is a Myanmar saying, 'Pinching the nail might hurt the fingertip.' Conflict or any outbreak of disease in any region of our country, not only in Rakhine State, is a common problem for the whole country and people.

Therefore, the whole country needs to provide assistance in addressing these issues. Regarding this matter, I have said in the round table talks in August about COVID-19 containment measures to develop a spirit of 'the Union for Rakhine , and Rakhine for the Union'. Only then would we be able to establish a modern, developed, long-lasting Democratic Federal Union which all of us have yearned for. Only then would we be able to hand over a genuine and valuable legacy to the future generations.

There is still one more thing I wish to talk about. It is none other than “health”. If we are healthy, we will be able to work; then we will be able to participate in development works as well as building peace and stability. Everybody needs to be constantly vigilant about the spread of COVID-19, health, and healthy practices. This is a reminder to individuals as well as all the members of UEHRD Committee.

This reminder is very important for the Healthcare Task Force of UEHRD, which is participating in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 in Rakhine State. Individual committee members should live healthily to carry out their works. Therefore, I wish to advise all members to live healthily while performing your respective duties. I also want to request all of you to take care of your health.

I have said this at the second anniversary of UEHRD that we are working for posterity for the future of our Union. If our citizens, our sons and daughters of the Union could solve the problems in Rakhine collaboratively, we could bequeath this priceless legacy – having self-confidence in ourselves – to the next generation,

With respect to Rakhine State matters, while there have been some constructive outlooks and assistances for what we have been doing in Rakhine, there have also been some internal and external communities who try to point out only our weaknesses and try to exacerbate the problems. I want to remind you of this. We are implementing our policy of ‘Leave no one behind’ for the development of our Union, including Rakhine State.

In conclusion, I want to express my appreciation to individuals of relevant ministries, the Chief Minister of Rakhine State and his government officials, businesspersons, members of UEHRD Task Forces, well-wishers and individuals who have worked and who are continuing to work for peace, stability and development in Rakhine State.

I send good wishes with Metta for all of you to be free from COVID-19; may you be able to serve the public good as much as possible and may you have peace of mind. Thank you all.

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