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Guarantee purchase system has been introduced to make sure farmers earn deservedly after the harvest



NAY PYI TAW, 24 March-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein, accompanied by Lt-Gen Hla Htay Win of the Office of the Commander in- Chief of Defence Services, Union Ministers U Myint Hlaing, U Soe Thein, U Thein Nyunt, U Khin Maung Myint, U Aye Myint and Dr Mya Aye, Deputy Minister Dr Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin and departmental heads, left here by air this afternoon and arrived in Patheingyi of Ayeyawady Region at 1 pm yesterday.

The President and party were welcomed at Patheingyi Airport by Union Minister U Ohn Myint, Chief Minister of Ayeyawady Region U Thein Aung, Speaker of Ayeyawady Region Hluttaw U Hsan Hsint, Commander of South-West Command Maj-Gen Soe Thein, Deputy Minister U Soe Tint, Deputy Minister U Than Tun, region ministers, departmental officials and members of social organizations.

The departmental personnel and local people also heartily welcomed the President along the road to Patheingyi and local roads waving miniature flags.

At the city hall in Patheingyi, the President attended the meeting with local people.

Also present at the meeting were Lt-Gen Hla Htay Win of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Union ministers, the speaker of the region Hluttaw, the commander of South-West Command, deputy ministers, region ministers, region Hluttaw representatives, departmental heads and officials, the principals of universities in Patheingyi, faculty members and members of social organizations.

First, Region Chief Minister U Thein Aung reported on locations of townships and towns in Ayeyawady Region, number of houses, households and population, cultivation of paddy and other nine major crops, construction of the road network and bridge projects, implementation of GDP in 2011-2012 and per capita income.

He then submitted detailed reports on accomplishments of rural development and poverty alleviation, matters related to agriculture, meat and fish, cooperative, small-scale industry, private micro-credit societies and environmental conservation, and implementation of the Patheingyi Port and Special Economic Zone.

Speaking on the occasion, President U Thein Sein said: I wish the Union Ministers, Hluttaw representatives, Region Chief Minister and cabinet members, the Commander of South-West Command and military officials, towns-elders and members of social organizations physical and mental wellbeing.

I am here to attend the inauguration of Paybin Rivercrossing Bridge which has been built on Pathein-Ngapudaw Road, No.11 Highway of Ayeyawady Delta Road Network Project.

As you all know, our Ayeyawady Region, being a delta, is teeming with rivers and creeks and we find it difficult to travel by road. Particularly, Ngapudaw relies mainly on water route due to its difficult road transport.

Although we had to take about four hours to reach Pathein in the past, now we can go there within about one hour thanks to the newly-built Pathein-Ngapudaw Road, through which all parts of Myanmar can be accessible. But, here, I would like to express my deep condolences for the loss of lives of people before the inauguration of the bridge and road due to a vessel capsizing. The bridge construction started on 10-1-2011 and we took more than a year to complete it. Ayeyawady Region produces abundance of salt, timber, rice and marine products. With its development of road transport infrastructures, the regional trade as well as socio-economy of the local people in such sectors as education and health will improve.

This delta region, which suffered a lot of damage and destruction in a naturally-unavoidable cyclone Nargis, has steadfastly carried out its reconstruction efforts through the unyielding spirit of the storm-stricken people. And this Pathein-Ngapudaw Bridge is part of their relentless efforts.

With the concept that earth bricks will be replaced with stone bricks, our Ayeyawady dwellers have worked the hardest to reach the current situation that is far better than the previous one. This is our invaluable experience. At a time when we were working for the reconstruction of the storm-hit region, we saw the courage of the affected people, unity between the State and the national people including the Tatmadaw and humanitarian assistance from our neighbouring countries and from the international community. At the same time, our citizens who were abroad for various reasons rendered their help as much as possible.

Moreover, philanthropic societies, NGOs and other organizations made their contributions. As a result of this, such societies and organizations are emerging one after another across the country to help the needy people and fulfill requirements.

Now it is heartening to see that the storm-affected regions have been able to renew their strength. But our Ayeyawady dwellers still have to do more. We have to continue our concerted efforts so that the whole Ayeyawady Region can yield more fruitful results to surprise the whole world. We are now planning to build a deep-sea port in this region inviting local and foreign investments. As efforts have been made to ensure direct exportation of products by upgrading Pathein Port, we have been able to export rice from the delta's granary directly from the region. We are also planning to establish three special industrial zones in the region.

The scene of the previously storm-hit region is now greatly different.

As you all know, I, a native of Ayeyawady, made frequent visits to our storm-affected region at that time in my capacity as chairman of National Disaster Risk Preparedness Central Committee to make close supervision.

Cyclone Nargis indeed is the largest natural disaster of our history. When I am here now, I remember the dire situation of the region at that time. More than 130,000 people were killed or went missing and the survivors got into trouble having various needs such as meals, accommodation and clothing. While we felt sorry for the casualties of our people, we had a great deal to do for the survivors. The best thing we could do then for the dead was giving all our energy into reconstruction efforts for the survivors. With the vow that every survivor must

continue to live, we made our rescue efforts. We tried not to cause consequential deaths in the emergency rescue periods. Then, we made reconstruction efforts with the belief that every survivor must reach a situation that was far better than that of the past. And then we continued our endeavours with our conviction that the entire region must develop in all aspects having resilience over natural disaster. With this expectation, we built roads and bridges for regional development. We will continue to work to make sure that the region has economic networks through transport networks.

Although Ayeyawady Region has not been perfect in all aspects, it has reached a new era. Upon completion of three special industrial zones, the region's status will change all of a sudden. Our young people who are working abroad or in such regions as Yangon and Mandalay because of few job opportunities will be able to work in their own region.

With industrial development plus more job prospects, our youths will have to work harder. They need to promote their quality by learning modern science and technologies. It is also necessary to change the conventional farming into industrial farming with a blend of modern agricultural methods. We also need to try to manufacture value-added products by changing the status in which we sell our products as raw materials.

I was born of two natives of this region. Like the young people who are here attending the ceremony, I grew up in a far-away village of this region with very few roads, hospitals and clinics. When I have become President, my native place has yet to develop like in the past. I am the one who is promoting the interests of all the Myanmar citizens.

I am discharging for the entire nation and the entire people. It is my duty. I would like you to understand I am taking a leading role not only for development of my native place but for the whole Union.

It was extremely difficult to pursue education in our childhood. I have grown up in rural area where the life is tough and hard. So, I have almost led that kind of life of the people. Because of those experiences, I have prioritized rural development and poverty alleviation in my presidency. It is my wish to help the poor of our country walk out of poverty.

I am vowed to fight tooth and nail to realize this wish.

Our citizens were among major scholars who contributed pearls of wisdom and took part in modernization of regional countries which have developed nations. Myanmar national scholars spread all over the world even in international aerospace technological field. Overwhelmed by political reforms of the country, migrant Myanmar citizens are coming back home to serve the nation as possibly as they can. Their expertise, experiences and wisdom are priceless forces for us. We are keeping the door open for the remaining national brethren. Please come back! Cooperate with us for national development. Doors are always for you.

Likewise, the youth of the country have to work much harder. Our country is still one of the least developed nations. The youth must make relentless efforts today in order that Myanmar can walk with her head held high on global stage in the future. Youths of today including those from remote areas where eternal peace is still a dream are the leaders of the future Myanmar. The nation-building strategy is something to be implemented in full consideration of future of the younger generation. We have to bolster up the youth. We have to enhance their quality and calibre. We have to create opportunities for them. We, the older generation, must selflessly help the younger generation, the future leaders for their improvement. In the coming years, we will increase education and health expenditure which is important for the future of the youth. We have also initiated capacity-enhancing programmes for them in cooperation with international organizations and governments.

Whenever I pay visit to foreign countries, I always propose to allow our youths pursue education at well-known universities of those countries. To enable our youths keep abreast of international community is also one of our nation-building plans.

As we have conducted rural development and poverty alleviation scheme which is topping our agenda far and wide, we have promoted the role of private sector in rice sector reforms. We are also taking measures to provide essential inputs and capitals for cultivation. Likewise, we have introduced guarantee purchase system to make sure farmers earn deservedly after the harvest. We are taking actions to establish a public-owned enterprise constituted with different social classes ranging from growers to exporters. It is still a long way, but we will have to surmount the difficulties in cooperation and coordination. This year, due to climate change and pests, there have been cases of decrease in yield and reduction in quality of various crops, affecting the price.

The government supplies fertilizer, one of the major inputs of agriculture sector but insufficiently. Consequently, farmers have to import fertilizer at high price with some inputs low in quality and inauthentic. The solution to this situation is none other than increased formation of farmers organizations including agriculture produce cooperative associations that can solve the problems and fulfill the requirements of farmers.

We have known that there were cases of slip of time management as farmers had already grown when the agricultural loans were disbursed. Specialized companies and government departments usually put off the date of loan repayment. In the last year, as the exchange rate had decreased, growers and breeders suffered losses. Like the rice growers, beans and pulses growers also suffered the same losses. We are dispatching market survey teams in search of new markets as our farmers suffer losses when the markets of the regular buyers of our products are filled with uncertainties. Likewise, domestic foodstuff manufacturers had faced the consequential effects, who were followed by exporters. So, the entire chain of agriculture and breeding businesses had underwent the same fate.

We have been closely cooperating with international and local scholars and institutions to adjust exchange rate appropriately and as a result, we will be able to set a stable rate in near future. We can adjust the rate in short time on our own.

But, we are taking time to make sure its long-term stability, profitability, international credit and hardness in global stock market, trading and money transfer.

Meanwhile, MPs are discussing at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to amend farmland laws and vacant and virgin land laws in accordance with the changing situations to enact as laws to make sure every one who runs the farm owns the farm. Although those laws were written to be agreeable to the current situations, it needs to amend and supplement them in response to the changes for their comprehensiveness.

Labour Law and rules for formation of labour unions have been enacted. I would like to urge the Region governments to strive for improving lives of farmers and workers and creating positive atmosphere for small and medium entrepreneurs. In forming good governance under the law, it is to be noticed that we need to avoid situations of exploiting and misunderstanding laws. Authorities at each level will work cautiously to ensure equality and social security of our citizens under the law in transition period.

Region and state governments need to exercise executive power in accord with the constitution. Though our Union government drew up budgets in transition period, region/state governments will have to allocate budgets on their own as from the coming fiscal year. I would like to ask region/state governments to adhere to the constitution in order

that they will be able to appropriately and fully exercise the powers invested in them, solidifying the sharing of powers. In this aspect, administration staff at the lower levels play an important role.

They must work to enable the people enjoy rights granted in the constitution. Region/state governments need to work under the constitution.

Notices and warnings are being issued and actions being taken against corruption, abuse of power and misappropriation.

Corruption, born with a system, is not only burden to the people but hindrance for building the nation. Only when we get rid of this thorn, will our trip be smooth. Although we do not publicize the actions for various reasons, our government is taking actions against corruption. I have already said that honest mistake could be forgiven, but actions would be taken against deliberate violations in accord with the law. Actions are being initiated against every case of corruption now. I would like to call on administration staff for giving the people the pleasure and for taking pragmatic measures to create good governance under the law.

All in all, by-elections are nearing. The election commission chairman is trying to organize the free and fair elections. Despite difficulties in compiling ballot lists, it is found that the commission is addressing the issues to prevent loss of any political parties. The election commission alone is not enough to organize free and fair elections. Respective political parties, our government, media and the entire people will have to cooperate with the commission. All the citizens have to cooperate with the commission as it is a concern of all the citizens.

The election commission announced notifications to inform every eligible voter to contact respective subcommissions to be enlisted in order to cast vote and political parties to ensure their supporters enlisted. It also urged to stick to laws and rules and regulations in compiling the ballot lists. As there are unnecessary errors in the ballot lists, the deadline for confirmation was postponed to 24 March 2012, bestowing favour to political parties and voters.

Winners and losers will emerge in the by-elections as per usual. We all need to work together to ensure that the outcome is accepted by all the people. Respecting the decision of the people, we need bear to loss. All political parties need to understand that the decision made by the people is key decision.

As the commission is doing its best to make the by-elections free and fair, our government has invited international monitors to offer testimony. Attention of the whole world has focused on the by-elections to be held for the first time while the incumbent government is in office. All our citizens need to support the bid to hold the free and fair by-elections to be watched by the international community. I would like to conclude my address, urging to lend a helping hand to the commission in accord with laws and rules and regulations understanding the labour, financial and technical difficulties of the commission and keeping in mind that the help should be neither interference nor hindrance. After the meeting, the President cordially greeted those present.-MNA