

A NEW DAWN IN MYANMAR:

POSSIBILITIES AND PROSPECTS

Presented by

Daw Yin Yin Myint

Director-General / Secretary

Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

- New civilian and elected government of Myanmar assumed the state responsibilities on 30 March 2011 with a President at its helm.
- The previous military government transferred the state power peacefully to the new civilian government, formed in accordance with the State Constitution, adopted by 2008 referendum.
- Democratic institutions such as the Parliaments at national and regional levels and respective administrative, legislative and judicial bodies to exercise three branches of State power have been established.

- In his inaugural speech to the Parliament and the Policy speeches that followed President U Thein Sein affirmed that the new government of Myanmar would implement measures to bring about good governance, clean government, flourishing democracy, fundamental rights of the citizens, rule of law, transparency, and accountability.
- The President has invited the armed national ethnic groups in Kachin, Shan and Kayah States to come back into the legal fold on 17 August 2011.

- The President acknowledged the existence of individuals and organizations that are skeptical about the new government and do not wish to accept the Constitution.
- He urged them to work together with the government for the interest of the nation and people.
- In this light, on 19 August 2011, the President received Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to find out potential common grounds for cooperation in the interests of the nation, setting aside different views.

- The new government is committed to rural development and poverty alleviation and has laid down eight tasks.
- Work Committees from central to grassroots level are formed to carry out these tasks.
- Myanmar's poverty rate is reduce to 16 % from the current rate of 26 % by 2015.

- On Social front, the pension allowances for pensioners are significantly increased for retired service personnel in commensurate with the changing economic and social conditions of the country.
- People's representatives in the Parliaments are openly discussing issues related to political, economic and social developments.
- The effort has started to yield positive results.

- On the economic front, in order to ease the effects of the falling US Dollar value in export earning, the government reduced taxes from 8 % to 2 % .
- All exported agricultural produced are granted tax exemption now to boost trade and industrial production.
- The Central Bank of Myanmar has permitted 11 private Banks to trade three foreign hard currency namely – the US\$, Euro and Singaporean dollar as of 25 November 2011.

- On the environmental front, the government has reconstituted the Forestry Ministry as the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry to address more effectively environmental issues.
- To support Myanmar's commitment to environmental conservation and economic development, Green Economy and Green Growth Forums were held in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon in November 2011 to sensitise the Myanmar people with Green Economy.
- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi took part in the Yangon Forum.

- Another initiative is the President's initiative to send the message to the two Parliaments in session that the construction of Myit Sone Dam in Kachin State would be suspended during the time of the present government in response to the public concerns about the Myit Sone project.
- The initiative is clear manifestation of the government paying attention to the popular public opinion.
- Amnesty was granted to over 26000 prisoners by the President exercising the mandate vested in him by the Constitution.
- Consideration for the release of more prisoners will be made by taking into account their good conduct in the prisons as well as the condition of peace and stability in the country.

- A national level Peace Committee was formed with the aim to achieve lasting peace in the country.
- Negotiations with the armed ethnic groups are continuing and initial peace agreements with some armed groups such as KIO have been achieved recently.
- The National Human Rights Commission, an independent body, has been established and it will facilitate promotion and protection on human rights in Myanmar.
- It will inform the President its findings through regular reports and will actively cooperate with International Organizations.

- On the political front, the government has amended the Political Parties Registration Law so that more political parties can join the mainstream political process in accordance with the State Constitution.
- The historic by-elections took place on 1 April 2012 with international monitors being permitted to observe the voting.
- 23 out of 24 contested seats went to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Party- the National League for Democracy.
- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself ran and got elected from Kawhmu constituency, Yangon.
- The by-elections were regarded as fair and transparent.

- In recognition of developments in by-election, many breakthroughs came in Myanmar's foreign relations.
- The E.U. , the U.S., Australia and Canada suspended sanctions imposed on Myanmar for one year.
- The U.S. suspended sanctions on investment in Myanmar making the U.S. business to come into Myanmar. In addition to naming the first U.S. Ambassador to Myanmar in 22 years.
- The E.U. High Representative Mrs. Ashton visited Myanmar in early May to have talks with the Myanmar government and to open an E.U. office in Yangon.
- A string of important dignitaries visited Myanmar including British Prime Minister, E.U. High Representative and UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki Mon, who addressed the Joint Myanmar Parliaments as the first dignitary.

- Quite recently, President U Thein Sein addressed the work coordination meeting on reform process sector by sector, urging the authorities to do the following:-
 - (1) To work hard for political stability and to make peace with ethnic armed groups step by step;
 - (2) To continue with tasks that need reforms for enhancing the socio-economic status of the people as second-step strategic reforms;
 - (3) To strive to ensure active participation of the people in the reform process;
 - (4) The morality and attitude of administrators at various levels must be correct to avoid bribery and corruption;
 - (5) To do business and make investment in line with the laws, rules and procedures for national economic development.

- A new dawn has set in Myanmar.
- Myanmar has embarked on the path of multi party democracy and the market economy.
- Democratic institutions like the Union level and regional level parliaments are in place.
- The government already released many who had been imprisoned on security grounds.
- Political parties like the NLD can join the mainstream politics.

- Peace initiatives have been carried out to achieve national reconciliation.
- However, representatives of Myanmar have to become more democratic changes.
- Real estate has sky-rocketed and negative results of fast development emerge.
- The main challenge will be to maintain political stability and momentum of reform process.

Thank You.