

Message sent by Senior General Than Shwe , Chairman of the State Peace and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services on the occasion of the 57th Anniversary of the Independence Day

Robust sovereignty of a country rests on solidarity of entire people, with Union Spirit as the base

YANGON, 4 Jan — The following is a translation of the message sent by State Peace and Development Council Chairman Defence Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Than Shwe on the occasion of the 57th Anniversary of the Independence Day.

On this auspicious occasion of the 57th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to extend greetings to all the national people of the State, with amity and high esteem.

It has now been 57 years since the independence and sovereignty of the Union of Myanmar was restored, after the entire national people had sacrificed lots of lives, blood and sweat.

Since prehistoric times, all the national brethren including Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan have been living in unity and oneness and in weal or woe throughout the course of history. Based on the love for their country and race, Union Spirit and patriotism has been flourishing in the mind and hearts of Myanmar people throughout the successive eras. Thanks to the urge of their noble spirit, they were able to regain independence and sovereignty.

Taking the lessons of history that the nation was strong and developed when there was national unity and it was weak and in backwardness when unity among the nationalities disintegrated, the government has made the firm resolve to build the nation, laying down the policy of non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of national solidarity; and perpetuation of sovereignty, and keeping national re-consolidation and perpetual flourishing and promotion of Union Spirit in the fore. Since its assumption of the State duties, the Government has been building a peaceful, modern and developed state, placing "Our Three Main National Causes", the national policy, in the fore. As national solidarity is the prime requirement for the nation-building drive, the government held negotiations with armed groups to make peace with them, and in this way, it has restored peace in the whole nation first. As peace is prevailing in the nation, it has continued to carry out the national development undertakings.

In its national consolidation drive, the government has given priority to the development of border areas, whose progress was slow due to security reasons. It founded the Central Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races, and has developed the economic infrastructure building programmes, and transport, agricultural, fish and animal farming, health and education sectors of the border areas. At the same time, it has achieved sound foundations for national consolidation.

Plans are being implemented after being drawn up for establishing a peaceful, modern and developed nation, which has been designated as national goal. In this context, the government formed the Special Projects Implementation Committee to build development infrastructures. Now, the committee is drawing up plans and implementing them regionwise and sectorwise. Border area development tasks are being carried out, alongside 24 development zones set up nationwide. Plans are also under way for rural development tasks. Relentless efforts are thus made to ensure equitable progress across the country leaving no part of the nation unattended.

With plans drawn up, new irrigation facilities and river water-pumping projects are being implemented year after year to ensure the infrastructural development of agriculture, which plays the largest part in national economy. At the same time, electric power projects, large and medium, are under way to encourage the industries that will boom and to fulfil the necessities of social system. Efforts are being made to generate

more and more megawatts of electricity year after year. In the transport sector, efforts are also being exerted with added momentum on extension, upgrading of motor roads, and town and village link-roads, construction of railroads and river-crossing bridges, expansion, upgarding and construction of airports.

After laying down the 30-year long-term national education promotion plan, measures are being taken for the development of human resources imperative for the education sector. To ensure an increase in learning opportunities and promotion of education level in both basic and higher education sectors, steps are being taken for widening the scope of specializations and for upgrading and opening the schools, colleges and universities year after year. As a result, educational facilities are now mushrooming across the country.

In the basic education sector, a total of 40,505 basic education schools have now been opened nationwide as part of the efforts to ensure that all citizens have access to basic education. The ongoing education plan has seen 96.6 percent rise in the enrolment rate of primary school level in the 2004-2005 school year, up from 77 percent in 1988. Enrolment per head has increased perceptibly in induction courses at every grade of the basic education level. Thanks to the 'Education for All' plan, the literacy rate swelled to 93.3 percent in 2004 from 78 percent in 1988.

The number of colleges and universities throughout the country has now reached 156. In the post-graduate education sector, doctoral courses in various specializations have been opened. They are now producing PhD degree holders. The government's huge investment in the education sector is now contributing to the continuous emergence of qualified human resources.

In the health sector, steps are being taken for provision of health care and promotion of medical education, for opening and upgrading of hospitals and dispensaries, and for installation of modern medical equipment to ensure the health and fitness of the entire national people. In like manner, one University of Traditional Medicines and traditional medicine hospitals were opened to give impetus to the development of traditional medical science.

In constant exercise of the independent and active foreign policy alongside the five principles of peaceful coexistence, Myanmar always steers her course towards friendly relations with the world nations, especially with her neighbouring countries.

The Union Solidarity and Development Association was formed with youth forces. Now, the Association is taking measures to turn the force of new generation youths into the consolidated national force by giving training to them.

Putting investment in various sectors in the country is in a sense laying a foundation for a new state. National stability, strong economy for the country and the people, and higher education for the entire national people are central to the establishment of a consolidated democracy. The process of building a peaceful, modern and developed nation is fundamental to shaping a democratic nation. Judging by the experience of the entire national people, the strength of the people plays a decisive role in the development of their country. The seven-point Road Map of the State is now being implemented to establish a modern, developed, discipline-flourishing democratic nation. The onus is on the entire national people to bear in their hearts positive attitude and to play an active part with the full sense of Union Spirit in the successful implementation of the Road Map.

The robust sovereignty of a country rests on the solidarity of the entire people living there with Union Spirit. As shown by international events, it is crystal clear that national solidarity is a must.

With firm determination that the peaceful, modern and developed nation, which is our national goal, must take shape without a shadow of doubts, we have laid down the following four national objectives for the 57th Anniversary Independence Day 2005. They are:

- 1. All the national people to collectively safeguard the national independence and sovereignty of the State and ensure non-disintegration of the Union and national unity,**
- 2. All the national people to unitedly strive with might and main for the emergence of an enduring State constitution and for building a new modern and developed nation,**
- 3. All the national people to work in concert for success of the seven-point Road Map of the State with Union Spirit and nationalist spirit, and**
- 4. All the national people to make concerted efforts for building a new discipline-flourishing democratic nation.**

On this auspicious occasion of the Independence Day of the Union of Myanmar, I cordially call upon all the brothers and sisters born in the Union to take harmonious measures in unity with full sense of Union Spirit and patriotic spirit for the implementation of the four national objectives.
