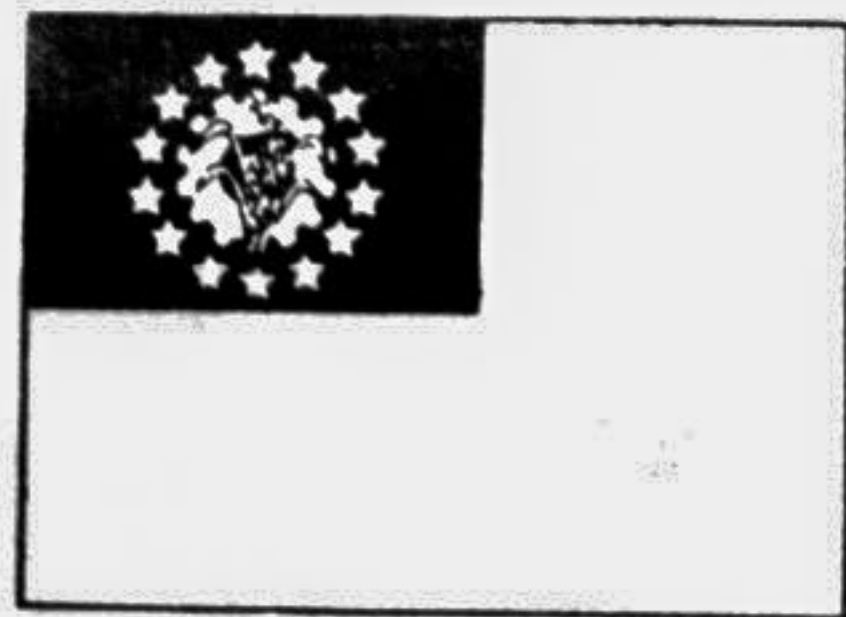




The Golden Jubilee of the Independence Day of the Union of Myanmar



The Daily Star

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Hailing the Golden Jubilee Union Day Union Spirit and Union Day

THE Union of Myanmar is a nation, with its own culture, literature, monarch and ruling system, where diverse national races have lived together in harmony, unity and cohesion since time immemorial. In the reign of Myanmar kings who considered national unity as an essential requirement, the country was peaceful and prosperous, and stood magnificent and firm as an affluent State. National unity was forged during the reign of King Anawrahta of Bagan Period; he was the founder of the first united Myanmar. King Bayintnaung of Toungoo Period came next to build the second united Myanmar; he brought the whole country under the one sovereign; he was followed by King Alaungpaya of Konbaung Period; who created the Third Myanmar empire.

National unity waned in latter parts of Konbaung Period due to various subversions which created disputes among members of the royal family. Capitalizing on this opportunity, the colonialists waged three aggressive wars against Myanmar employing various wily schemes and put the nation into servitude. Myanmar's last reigning monarch, King Thibaw, was taken away and forced into exile in Ratnagiri, India.

The indigenous peoples of the Union, residing in the hilly regions and the plains, strove together to show their resentment of foreign domination by getting hold of whatever weapons they could lay their hands on and fighting back whenever opportunity arose. Eventually, the national leaders changed their anti-colonialist strategy from open armed struggle to national movement based on the united force of the entire Union nationalities.

The colonialists, to prolong their rule and exploit the natural resources of Myanmar for long, made a sinister design for sapping the national strength by sowing discord among the national brethren of the land. That was their infamous "divide-and-rule policy".

Meanwhile, national leaders fanned the Union Spirit and patriotism among the Myanmar people. The colonialists then tried to extinguish the Union Spirit being forged thus through various political tactics. With a view to fighting the colonialists with strong, united national force, the Burma Independence Army came into being in Thailand in 1941 with various na-

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tionality of Myanmar and at the same time endeavours were made for national consolidation within the country.

When the colonialists were no longer in a position to avoid conceding independence to Myanmar, they resorted to various means to undermine national unity and tried to distance the people of the hills and the people of plains with the aim of leaving out the hill regions to exist under their influence and Commonwealth umbrella.

Whatever mischievous attempts the colonialists had made, Myanmar's boldness showed their unity by signing the historic Panglong Agreement which spelled out in unequivocal terms that the entire Myanmar must be totally free of foreign domination. The signing of the agreement on 12 February 1947 was the last nail in the colonial coffin.

The Panglong Conference reflected the national unity at its pinnacle as it was born together with independence struggle and national races came to realize that national unity was the fundamental factor in their bid to wrest independence back.

The national unity thus forged did not last for long due to political crisis which surfaced just after regaining independence as dissatisfaction arose among some of the national races. This in turn led to political squabbling which placed the country in great peril.

In order to save the country from total disaster, the Caretaker Government was vested with powers to take over the country in 1958 to bring political stability to the country. Later again, the Revolution Council had to step in March 1962 to save the general deteriorating situation. And political stability was restored.

Again, more than two decades later, there came disturbances resulting in the deteriorating conditions in the country.

The Tatmadaw, as the State Law and Order Restoration Council, has saved the nation from falling into the abyss when it was confronted with the 1988 crisis. From that time on, it has been endeavouring for political and economic reforms of the nation while striving for ensuring the rule of law and prevalence of peace and tranquillity.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council has been

achieving considerable success in national reconciliation, marking a significant milestone in the history, and spending huge sums of money on works for the development of the border areas.

It has also been offering an olive-branch to the underground armed groups to return to the legal fold. So far 15 armed groups realizing the genuine goodwill and true attitude of the government have abandoned their armed struggle line and returned to the legal fold. They are now actively engaged in regional development works joining hands with the Government.

In spite of these tangible results, the entire mass of the national people need to be aware of the constant threat of neo-colonialists who have always been waiting for a chance to exploit small nations like Myanmar politically, economically and in other ways as well.

At the same time, it is up to the entire mass of national people to work for the emergence of the State Constitution and materialization of four political, four economic and four social objectives which have been laid down by the State for allround development of the nation without losing sight of the four points stated in the People's Desire.

As the entire nation prepares for celebrating the Golden Jubilee Union Day, which will fall on 12 February, 1997, The State Law and Order Restoration Council has laid down the five national objectives for the occasion. They are:

— all the national races to safeguard the Union and ensure its lasting existence with the Union spirit;

— all the national races to strive together for the emergence of enduring State Constitution;

— all the national races to exert their utmost efforts for the successful implementation of the political, economic and social objectives of the State;

— all the national races to take part in building a peaceful, modern and developed nation;

— all the national races to oppose and crush internal and external destructive elements who are disturbing and disrupting the stability and progress of the State.

The objectives indicate immediate tasks of the entire national races of the Union which are to be implemented without fail for the abiding existence of the national and the people in unity and prosperity.



Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council and Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar.

Ambassador's Message

Today, the Union of Myanmar celebrates the (50th) Anniversary of her Independence. Since it is the Golden Jubilee, the 1998 Independence Day celebrations will be the most significant and remarkable. On this auspicious day, I would like to extend my heartfelt and warm greetings to the Government and the people of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

In the Union of Myanmar, the State Law and Order Restoration Council has safeguarded the nation from disintegration and the situation from further deterioration. Now that the law and order have been restored, in order to maintain it and in addition, to work for economic and political stability, the State Law and Order Restoration Council has been renamed to State Peace and Development Council on 15-11-97.

The State Peace and Development Council will strive for socio-economic uplift of all the national peoples, including 135 national races, fulfilling the basic needs while enjoying all to be fact of the efforts for building a modern nation based on the strength of self-reliant nation-building forces. For each and every nation, both in times of peace and war, strong army is needed for safeguarding and protecting the interest of the nation and the people. Our country is rich in natural resources and home for various national races. Unscrupulous neo-colonialists are always eyeing at our country to make political and economic gains. For that very reason, our army needs to be militarily strong. It is nationalism that makes our nation consolidated and strong. It is with it that we can safeguard our independence and sovereignty. It is with the guiding light of this spirit that we can build our nation peaceful, strong and developed.

It is known that there has been already freedom of religion

in the Union of Myanmar since thousand years ago. There have been also different religious faith such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Animism and others. According to 1997 statistics, there are altogether 51322 Buddhist monasteries, 5200 Christian Churches, 3215 Islamic mosques, 1010 Hindu temples and other religious buildings throughout the Union of Myanmar.

Myanmar "Naing-ngan" is firmly and steadfastly practising the independent and active foreign policy maintaining friendly relations with the nations of the world, especially with the neighbouring countries. In spite of attempts and machination from inside and outside to ostracize the country, Myanmar has been integrated into the regional grouping — the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In view of such favourable conditions, it is the time of crucial importance to take concrete steps to raise the momentum to materialize the set goal-emergence of a peaceful, modern and developed nation. Myanmar has already been admitted to BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation) which is an economic bloc.

The Union of Myanmar has achieved marked progress in international relations, greater mutual cooperation with the nations in the region, cooperation with international organizations including the United Nations and international trade and commerce.

As we share the common border, our bilateral relations between the two countries have been cordial and friendly since the time of the inception of the People's Republic of Bangladesh by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Myanmar was one of the first countries to accord recognition to Bangladesh and diplomatic relations were

established in March 1972. Since then, these ties of friendship and cooperation have maintained and strengthened through exchange of visits between the two countries at various levels. It is also expected that there will be exchange of visits of high level goodwill delegations between the two countries in the near future.

As we, all Myanmarans, commemorate the Golden Jubilee Independence Day celebrations, let us redouble our efforts with firm determination to effectively carry out Our Three Main National Causes of the State — non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of national sovereignty — and also implement the objectives for the occasion, in marching towards the Golden Era.

On this Golden Jubilee occasion, I will like to take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for the progress and prosperity of the People of Bangladesh and for the existing friendly relations between our two neighbouring countries to be further strengthened.



U Tint Lwin
Ambassador of the Union of Myanmar to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Freedom of Religion in Myanmar

Ba Sein (Religious Affairs)

IT is known that there has been already freedom of religion in the Union of Myanmar since thousand years ago. Altogether 135 national races have been peacefully living together in the Union of Myanmar since dawn of ancient history of Myanmar. There have been also different religious faith such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Animism and others since then. More than 89 per cent of the present population of the Union of Myanmar believes in Buddhism, 5.06 per cent in Christianity, 3.78 per cent in Islam, 1.51 per cent in Hinduism, 0.21 per cent in Animism and 0.16 per cent in others. The Myanmar national races live together peacefully and always pay respect and loving-kindness to each other in spite of their different religious faith, and any problems, difficulties and conflicts never arise among them relating to their belief in different religions. They have lived together in peace leading to stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity, prevalence of Law and Order since Myanmar has regained her independence in 1948. During the period of the British Colonial Government, Myanmar national races, were oppressed under their rules of separation. However, Myanmar national races were united to fight for Independence and protect their own culture and religions.

After having regained Independence, the people and Government of the Union of Myanmar confirm and adopt one clause on "the freedom of religion" in the constitution of the Union of Myanmar. According to the constitution of the State, all Myanmar national races share equal rights and responsibilities for the freedom of religion from generation to generation.

Many Buddhist monasteries, Christian churches, Islamic mosques, Hindu temples and other religious buildings stand side by side throughout the Union of Myanmar, and it is a significant symbol of freedom of religion.

And also, financial grants and other necessary materials for the communities of religions are supported and provided by the Government of the Union of Myanmar in order to promote and flourish their religions. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, on behalf of the Government of the Union of Myanmar, now and then makes necessary arrangements for the religious leaders to go abroad for attending their religious meetings, conferences and seminars which will be held and organized in respective nations.

A large number of books, periodicals, journals, magazines and others on religions can be freely published and distributed in accordance with the existing rules and regulations of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Union of Myanmar. Talks and

messages of their holy days are allowed to be broadcast every year, and travelling freepass is also issued to the religious leaders of the religious organizations in order to visit their respective communities throughout Myanmar at any time. Haj pilgrims of Islamic community in the Union of Myanmar are yearly sent to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the Government of the Union of Myanmar for Haj pilgrimage.

All these noble functions of the Government of the Union of Myanmar fully guarantee freedom of religion for all national races in the Union of Myanmar.

According to 1997 statistics, there are altogether 51322 Buddhist monasteries, 5200 Christian churches, 3215 Islamic mosques, 1010 Hindu temples and other religious buildings throughout the Union of Myanmar.

A Division of staff for other religions is established under the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Union of Myanmar in order to carry out various affairs relating to other religions effectively. For the time being, all Myanmar national races are sharing equal rights and justice of cultural, economic, social and religious affairs and unitedly striving to build new modern developed nation under the effective, wish and prudent guidance and leadership of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar.

(New light of Myanmar)

Industrial Power — Strength for National Development

INDUSTRIAL development is a crucial factor for development of a country. Every nation has made its endeavours to build better basic foundations for development. The State Peace and Development Council, with the long-term goal to develop the country, is developing all sectors and industrial structures with greater momentum as part of an ongoing movement.

In line with market-oriented economic system many State-run enterprises were leased out to local and foreign investors or shared as joint ventures. Industrial technology and finances are made available for development of the industrial sector. Industrial Development Zones such as Dagon Myothit, Hlithayay, Shwepyithar and Thanyin were established and the Industrial Development Bank was also formed with a view to developing this sector.

During the two years Myanmar Industrial Development

Committee amended patent laws, organized industrial exhibitions, formulated plans for development of industrial sector in a most proper manner. Various industries have been organized in the industrial zones and basic requirements including ample electricity are being provided as necessary after due coordination.

The long-term objectives of Myanmar's industrial policy has been to transform a predominantly agricultural economy into an agro-based industrialized country. The government has promoted and fostered small and manageable industries in the first instance.

At the coordination meeting of Myanmar Industrial Development Committee Patron of MDC Secretary-2 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Tin Oo said the Committee was reconstituted with the Minister for Science and Technology as Chairman in the time of the State Peace and Development Council.

For Myanmar's industrial development, Senior General Than Shwe set down five objectives — development of agro-based industries, qualitative and quantitative improvement of industrial products, production of new industrial items, manufacture of industrial equipment, and acquisition of good opportunities required for industrialization of the nation.

The Secretary-2 emphasized that most ministers are assigned MDC duties to make considerable progress in the industry sector. He spoke of the need for MDC to accelerate tasks, reorganize the Work Committee and subcommittees and implement tasks for industrial zone projects.

We urge industrialists to make expeditious efforts in implementation of respective tasks in accordance with the motto "Industrial power — strength for national development". (New light of Myanmar)

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(New light of Myanmar)

Myanmar towards the Golden Era

THE 1998 Independence Day celebrations will be most significant and remarkable since it is the Golden Jubilee. It will be held in accord with the motto "From the Myanmar Golden Jubilee Independence towards the Golden Era."

In reality Myanmar's independence was regained only after waging its struggle against the colonialists and imperialists for over a century. In the struggle for independence, forefathers of all national races spearheaded by the Tatmadaw had sacrificed their lives in the interest of the people. Independence was not regained easily and the freedom struggle was crowned with success only after passing through much suffering and difficulties.

According to the programme, the Independence Day celebrations will be observed with full political essence after laying down the four national objectives:

— all citizens to always collectively safeguard perpetuation of national independence and sovereignty;

— all citizens to unitedly strive for non-disintegration of

the Union and non-disintegration of national solidarity.

— all citizens to conscientiously implement the projects for building a modern and developed new nation; and,

— all citizens to be united in endeavouring for the emergence of an enduring constitution.

In accord with these objectives, exhibitions on historical facts about the past 50 years will be held. The Golden Jubilee Independence Day celebrations will be more complete because all epochs historical documents including development in the time of the State Peace and Development Council and photographs will be exhibited.

As we, all Myanmarans, commemorate the Golden Jubilee Independence Day celebrations, let us redouble our efforts with firm determination to effectively carry out Our Three Main National Causes of the State — non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of national sovereignty — and also implement the objectives for the occasion, in marching towards the Golden Era.

(New light of Myanmar)

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

Our heartfelt felicitations to the People and Government of Myanmar on this auspicious occasion

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