

Domestic News

Senior General Than Shwe attends inauguration of the Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine)

YANGON, 5 Feb — As a gesture of hailing the 58th Anniversary Union Day, Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine), the longest and the largest in Myanmar, was successfully commissioned into service on a grand scale on 5-2-2005 morning with greetings extended by Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe.

Also present on the occasion were members of the State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann, Lt-Gen Maung Bo, Lt-Gen Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo and Lt-Gen Tin Aye, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Vice-Admiral Soe Thein, Commander-in-Chief (Air) Lt-Gen Myat Hein, Chairman of Mon State Peace and Development Council Commander of South-East Command Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung, the ministers, the deputy ministers, senior military officers, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, departmental heads, local authorities, employees who participated in construction of the bridge, local people, members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association, Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF), Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MCWA), War Veterans Organization, Red Cross and Auxiliary Fire Brigades, teachers, students, nurses and dance troupes totaling over 25,000.

Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe extended greetings to the people at the opening ceremony. He said he came to Mawlamyine to attend the inauguration of Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) and he conveyed best wishes to those present.

He said it has been a long time that the government would like to build such bridge that is useful to the region and the country. However, the bridge construction project could not be implemented immediately because of some difficulties, especially financial constraints and technological problems. The government waited for appropriate time and circumstances.

Now economy of the country has improved to a certain extent.

As small, medium and large bridges could be built technologically, the government gained technical know-how and experiences. Therefore it is capable of building such kind of bridge, he said.

It is important to build strength of solidarity, community peace and tranquility and prevalence of law and order whatever difficulty the country encounters. Difficulties can be overcome through these two strengths. The bridge has emerged because of the two strengths, he said.

Continuing, he said, the government built this bridge with the aims of ensuring regional development and promoting socio-economic life of local people. Local people can now go easily from one place to another through the bridge in a short time.

The bridge will serve the interests of the State and the region.

He said another Sittaung River Bridge is under construction near the existing old Sittaung Bridge for the development of Mon State and Taninthayi Division. The government is doing its best with the aim of developing all parts of the regions in the Union.

Therefore, the Senior General urged each and every citizen to safeguard State-owned properties including this bridge that contributes towards the interests of the region and the people as their own and maintain them for durability.

Afterwards, Senior General Than Shwe cordially greeted those present.

At the auspicious time, Commander Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung, Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun and Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min cut the ribbon to open the bridge.

The Senior General and party posed for documentary photo at the bridge.

After unveiling the stone plaque of the bridge, the Senior General cordially greeted the people attending the ceremony.

The Senior General and party passed through the bridge by car.

On Mottama bank, the commander and the ministers formally opened the bridge. The Senior General and party had documentary photo taken.

General Thura Shwe Mann gives a speech at inauguration of the Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine)

YANGON, 5 Feb — The following is the full text of speech given by General Thura Shwe Mann, member of the State Peace and Development Council at the inauguration of the Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) on 5-2-2005 in Mawlamyine.

“The Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) is the longest bridge in Myanmar. It has a two-mile-long motor road and four-mile-long railroad. It also has pedestrian lanes. In a sense, the bridge serves as a political, economic and social strategies of Myanmar.

The bridge was constructed at the confluence of the Thanlwin River, the Gyaing River and the Attayan River. The engineers had to work hard to construct the bridge because the river is not only wide and deep but also has a lot of whirls. Relentless efforts and energy is a crying need for construction of the bridge.

Therefore, the bridge will always reflect the brains and brawn of Myanmar engineers. From the nationalistic point of view, the bridge is a national pride as well as a grace for Mawlamyine of Mon State.

A total of 194 bridges whose length are over 180 feet have been constructed in the times of the Tatmadaw government. The Mawlamyine Bridge is among them. The Ministry of Construction built 179 bridges; the Directorate of Military Engineers under the Ministry of Defence, 7 bridges; the Ministry of Rail Transportation, 7 bridges; and the Ministry of Electric Power, one bridge. Arrangements are under way to construct a bridge spanning the Sittaung River and linking Mon State and Bago Division. Moreover, bridges will also be constructed in other places as necessary.

In line with the guidance and encouragement of the Head of State, there have emerged 14 major bridges — four bridges spanning the Thanlwin River — the Hpa-an Bridge in Kayin State, the Tahsan Bridge and the Takaw-et Bridge in Shan State; seven bridges spanning the Ayeyawady River —

Nawaday (Pyay) Bridge, Bala Min Htin (Myitkyina) Bridge, Bo Myat Tun Bridge, Maubin Bridge, and Dedaye Bridge in Ayeyawady Division; Anawrahta (Chauk) Bridge, Magway Bridge; two bridges spanning the Chindwin River — Hsinphyushin Bridge and Monywa Bridge; and Sittaung river-crossing Shwekyin-Madauk Bridge.

The government is constructing the bridges with the aim of ensuring easy accessibility between one region and the other and raising the socio-economic life of national people.

Before this bridge has come into existence, people travelling to Mawlamyine found it difficult in crossing the Thanlwin River. Z-craft and ferries were the only transport means. It took long to reach the other bank. Down on luck, travellers had to spend the night there. It was also risky to cross the river in the rainy season. Now, these obstacles are a thing of the past.

Furthermore, Mon State will boom in trade with neighbouring regions. For instance, Hpa-an is only a few hours drive from Mawlamyine.

Now, a network of transport has linked the east with the west, and the north with the south. The total miles of roads have increased to 56,600 at present from 21,400 in 1988. More and more agricultural infrastructures are being established across the country just as the number of transport infrastructures is on the rise.

The same thing can be said of the education and health sectors. Measures are being taken to promote the education and health standards through the establishment of development zones. At the same time, development tasks are also being carried out in rural and border areas.

The steps now being taken are aimed at narrowing the development gaps between one region and another. In other words, these measures are the efforts to ensure social advancement. In this process, the government is building infrastructures needed for economy, education, health and transport in cooperation with the people. In a sense, they are

the fruitful results stemming from the concerted efforts made by the government and the people.

The Tatmadaw government led by Head of State Senior General Than Shwe has never lost sight of public interests. It always pays special attention to it. Now, the Head of State gave guidance, saying that infrastructures needed for national development have now been established; that continued efforts are to be made to make the most of them; and that hope must be set on the establishment of a peaceful, modern and developed nation. Now is the time that the Tatmadaw and the people should go hand in hand to serve the interests of the country. History has proved that armed insurgencies are detrimental to the development of socio-economic life.

In line with the guidance of the Head of State, arrangements are made to enable armed groups to return to the legal fold and to participate in the nation-building tasks. As a result, a total of 17 armed groups have returned to the legal fold. They are now lending themselves to the development tasks in their respective regions in concert with the government. Thus, a good legacy of solidarity and prosperity can be handed down to posterity.

Our Three Main National Causes in a sense are patriotism or Union Spirit. It is also a national policy that will never go wrong at any given time. The 12 political, economic and social objectives are also correct working guidelines. By implementing these policies, regional development has to be undertaken to enable the country to stay in touch with the international community.

The seven-point Road Map was laid down to ensure a smooth transition to a democracy relevant to historical background, topographical conditions, and cultural tradition of the country.

It is historic concern for the people to join hands with the government for realizing the correct political work programmes. Only then will the discipline-flourishing democratic nation emerge.

In conclusion, it is necessary for the entire national people living in Mon State to stand in solidarity and to maintain the development momentum.”

Later, General Thura Shwe Mann urged local people to actively participate in the shaping of a peaceful, modern, developed, discipline-flourishing democratic nation and to maintain the newly-constructed transport facility for its long-term use.

Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) — Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) is the 179th of the bridges with the length of over 180 feet built by the Ministry of Construction. The Ministry of Construction is building transport infrastructures in the country with goodwill. In accord with the goodwill of Head of State Senior General Than Shwe, geographical survey was conducted in 1998 to construct Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine). The bridge construction started after the stake-driving ceremony took place on 18 March 2000. It is the longest one with 28 bole piles built with technical help of Caisson Type Foundation. It was constructed near Gaungsay Island between Mawlamyine, the capital of Mon State, and Mottama.

It is the rail-cum-road bridge — two railroads and one motor road. Not only the railroads but the motor road were built at the bridge within the iron frames. The super structure of the bridge is of steel frame and reinforced concrete and the lower one, of reinforced concrete piles and bole piles.

The bridge has 28 feet wide motor road and the railroad, 14 feet wide. It has six feet wide pedestrian lane on both sides. Its clearance is 328 feet wide and 46 feet high. The main bridge is 7,699 feet long. Its approach road on Mawlamyine bank is 1,624 feet long and 2,252 feet on Mottama bank, totalling 11,575.

The bridge is located on Yangon-Mawlamyine-Myeik-Kawthoung Road. Construction started on 18 March 2000 and was completed on 7 December 2004.

Myanmar still facing unjust accusations of child soldiers as only slanders and falsehood reach UN Committee for Prevention of Recruitment of Minors for Armed Forces meets : The Committee for Prevention of Recruitment of Minors for Armed Forces

YANGON, 3 Feb—The Committee for Prevention of Recruitment of Minors for Armed Forces held its fourth coordination meeting on 3-2-2005 afternoon, with an address by Chairman of the Committee Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thein Sein. Also present were members of the Committee ministers, the deputy chief justice, the deputy attorney-general, senior military officers, officials and departmental heads. *The following is the full text of address given by the Secretary-1.*

“After assumption of the State duties, the Government has been working overtime, with the aim of building a new nation, implementing the 12 objectives as the national policy. And due to the efforts, the political, economic and social sectors of the nation are witnessing progress to a certain degree. It is also materializing plans with might and main to develop the border areas and the rural areas home to about 70 per cent of the population for all the national races to enjoy the fruits of progress fairly.

The Government is striving for ensuring peace and stability and the rule of law, improving the means of people’s livelihood, strengthening the economy, and developing the human resources for the nation-building task, while laying down and implementing the seven-point Road Map for democracy transition. It is now in the process of successfully holding the National Convention, the first step of the Road Map, he said.

Instead of rendering a helping hand to the emergence of a desired discipline-flourishing democratic state at this time, some saboteurs at home and abroad are trying to discredit the Government, tarnish the image of the race, create difficulties for the people, and destroy the National Convention, holding personal and ideological prejudices as their dogmatism. All the people have witnessed their evil schemes to slander Myanmar in many ways with the intention of blemishing her dignity in the world.

Employing the imposition of democracy shaped by themselves and human rights as an excuse, the perpetrators are defaming the nation, using the problems of forced labour, narcotic drugs, alleged sexual violence against women in border areas, human trafficking, and child soldiers as tools. They are even making various attempts to break up the Tatmadaw, which has fine traditions.

The conspirators are framing the Tatmadaw for the alleged forced recruitment of juvenile soldiers for the front lines, and trying to raise the matter at the UN for the global body to take action against Myanmar. Thus, the committee will have to pay attention to refuting the matter. Concerning the accusations of child soldiers, the Secretary-1 said that the Tatmadaw is an armed force systematically formed according to laws, bylaws, rules and directives, and also an institution with fine traditions. In accord with its rules and regulations, the Tatmadaw is enlisting only the persons who have reached the age of 18 and who meet the required standards, and they are the steadfast rules and regulations strictly adhered by the Tatmadaw. In 2004, the Tatmadaw invited the UNICEF resident representative to study the recruitment rules, orders and directives for Defence Services (Army) Recruiting Units in Yangon and Mandalay and also to visit the recruits.

But Myanmar is still facing unjust accusations as only the slanders falsehood have reached the UN, because of some unscrupulous persons' perpetrations to bar the truth about the Tatmadaw's constructive acts from arriving at the global body. As such, he said, the committee will have to heighten its efforts to convey the truth to the UN.

Next, those present gave an account of measures being taken in accord with laws in diplomatic, judiciary, law, social, labour, and Tatmadaw sectors to refute the groundless accusations of the destructive elements and to help the international community understand the committee's correct endeavours for prevention of recruitment of minors for armed forces. In response, the Secretary-1 delivered concluding remarks, saying that some certain big powers will keep on making accusations against Myanmar in various spheres so long as the destructive

elements remain in existence who hold negative views on the nation. It is needed to always rebut all the baseless accusations against Myanmar in order to eliminate misunderstandings of the international community.

The officials concerned need to systematically collect the data on issuing national registration cards to the citizens, health care, judiciary and legal measures for the children, and policies such as civilian and military laws, rules and regulations, orders and directives.

The officials at different levels should supervise effectively recruitment tasks and undergoing military training of the Myanma Tatmadaw, and to help the resident representatives of UN agencies in the nation to occasionally witness these measures. In conclusion, the Secretary-1 called for thorough refutation of all rootless accusations against the nation by constantly exposing the committee's correct activities to the international community.”

International Relations

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister returns home

YANGON, 5 Feb — Mr. Alexander Yu Alekseev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation who visited Myanmar at the invitation of U Kyaw Thu, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, left Yangon by air on 5-2-2005 afternoon.

During his visit to Myanmar, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Lt-Gen Soe Win on 4 February and attended the regular consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries, held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the same day.

At the consultations, the two sides cordially discussed and exchanged views on the current international situation, foreign affairs of the two countries, domestic developments, regional cooperation and promotion of Myanmar-Russia relations and bilateral cooperation among others.

