

Non-interference in internal affairs of a nation is a fundamental principle of United Nations, ASEAN and regional organizations

As Myanmar does not interfere in internal affairs of others, it opposes interference in its internal affairs

Myanmar reaches crucial and last step of transition to democracy

Matters of an individual should not overshadow that process

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint addresses the 17th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting

NAY PYI TAW, 1 June—A Myanmar delegation led by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint attended the 17th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on 27 and 28 May.

Also present on the occasion were representatives from ten ASEAN member countries, 27 EU countries and European Commission and the ASEAN Secretary-General.

At 5 pm on 27 May, leaders of representatives from ASEAN member countries held an informal meeting. At the meeting, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Chairman of ASEAN, voiced his concern over putting up a case against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi by Myanmar and stressed the need to forge national reconciliation in Myanmar.

In response to the statement of the Thai Foreign Minister, Leader of Myanmar delegation Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint said that the matter was discussed at the ASEM Ministers' Meeting held in Hanoi, Vietnam, and it had already been explained by the Myanmar Minister for Foreign Affairs. And it is assumed that the matter no longer needs to be put on the agenda of the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting again. Each and every nation has its own internal problems. Taking action against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for her offence is a matter of internal legal proceedings. As Myanmar is a sovereign nation, it is not fair and proper to interfere in its internal affairs. Myanmar has already fostered national reconciliation through the successful holding of the National Convention five times in four years from 2004 to 2007. Over 1,000 delegates from all walks of life participated in the National Convention with the exception of the NLD party although it had been invited to participate in. The National Convention is none other than a dialogue, for it has successfully built national reconciliation. The Myanmar government is in the process of implementing the seven-step Road Map. Only now, it is impossible to forge national reconciliation from the start. Actually, it is Thailand that needs to forge national reconciliation. Thailand saw year-long demonstrations in which different groups in red, yellow and blue made an attempt to oust the government and jeopardize the ASEAN summits. Therefore, it is compulsory for Thailand to forge national reconciliation, and it should not impose pressure on Myanmar and interfere in its internal affairs.

The 17th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting was held at Hotel Inter-Continental Grand Ballroom from 9 to 9.30 am on 28 May and it was jointly chaired by Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign

Minister H.E. Mr Hor Namhong and Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Mr Jan Kohout of Czech Republic. Britain and Spain criticized Myanmar at the meeting.

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint, leader of the Myanmar delegation, said that he would like to explain the prevailing internal affairs of Myanmar to the colleagues from European countries, that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi let Mr John William Yettaw, a US citizen who intruded into her house, stay for two days, had a talk with him and fed him, that it was against the law and that a lawsuit had to be unavoidably filed against her.

The deputy minister continued that, in accordance with the law, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had the right to defend herself by asking services of lawyers, that the government had taken all the necessary measures to meet her food and shelter needs and provide health care to her on humanitarian grounds, that Myanmar, like any other sovereign nation, had its own judicial system, that it was based on the British judicial system, that there was an independent administration of justice in Myanmar, that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Mr John William Yettaw and her two housemaids were being sued by the police for breaking the existing law, that all the defendants were allowed to consult with their respective lawyers in private and the government allowed representatives from embassies in Yangon who were interested in the case to attend the hearing twice.

The deputy minister went on to say that non-interference in the internal affairs of a nation was the basic principle of the United Nations, ASEAN and regional organizations, that, in accordance with its long-practised non-aligned policy and independent foreign policy, Myanmar had never interfered in the internal affairs of other nations and would not like them to meddle in its domestic affairs, that some neighbouring nations were unreasonably interested in the hearing the case of Mr John William Yettaw but it should not be like interfering in the internal affairs of a nation and that the UN Security Council, in its press statement on Myanmar, recognized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Myanmar and the fact that the future of Myanmar lies in the hands of Myanmar people only but it was regrettable to learn that these were not mentioned in the press statement of Thailand, Chairman of ASEAN.

Myanmar's democracy transition was in its crucial and final stages. At such a time, the matters of a person should not overshadow the democratization process. Anyhow, the time had come near for Myanmar's democracy Road Map to meet with its success, he said.

Lessons had been taken from the fact that

world's countries were not able to make democratic changes overnight and they have encountered numerous hardships and chaos. Myanmar was preparing for holding the free and fair multi-party democracy general election, the fifth step of the Road Map, in 2010. Political parties would be allowed to be registered and organized systematically in accord with the election law, said the deputy minister.

The international community itself should best assist Myanmar by encouraging all parties to participate in Myanmar's political process without infringing the seven-step Road Map. The lawsuit against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was the internal legal issue, not political or human rights issue. Therefore, any pressure and interference from abroad would not be accepted. It was also hoped that EU nations would understand Myanmar more.

The morning session of the meeting ended at 1 pm. Then followed a working lunch of the leaders of the delegations. At the lunch also, the leaders of delegations from Britain, EC, Slovakia, France, Norway and Czech Republic voiced their concern over Myanmar's political situation and the action being taken against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and urged the soonest release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Myanmar delegation leader, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that within Myanmar's territory, action would be taken against anyone who violated the existing laws in accord with the law of Myanmar. The matter of releasing or not releasing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was the matter of the court and it was not concerned with the government. In Myanmar there was an independent administration of justice, elaborated the deputy minister.

The delegate of Netherlands said he believed that the case was the internal legal issue as stated by the Myanmar side. Therefore, there should be no interference in its internal affairs.

After the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting, matters were coordinated to issue a joint communiqué. In the paragraph featuring the issue of Myanmar, EU took measures to recognize the activities of its representative to Myanmar Piero Fassino. However, the Myanmar delegation leader said Myanmar did not recognize the appointment of the EU representative as well as his activities. The current issues are the internal affairs of Myanmar. The non-interference policy is the one that is being exercised by the UN, ASEAN and many countries, he said. The Myanmar side discussed matters related to focusing on continued implementation of the seven-step Road Map. —MNA