

Prime Minister General Thein Sein attends ASEAN-UN International Pledging Conference

Myanmar warmly welcomes any assistance and aid presented with genuine goodwill from any country or organization, provided that there are no strings attached nor politicization involved

YANGON, 25 May - today by Prime Minister Pledging Conference. The following is the full General Thein Sein at the text of address delivered ASEAN-UN International Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-Gen-



Prime Minister General Thein Sein addresses ASEAN-UN International Pledging Conference. —MNA



eral of the United Nations Excellency Mr George Yeo, Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee

Distinguished Ministers

Excellency Dr Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN

Delegates from donor countries

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

May I, first of all, say that the Government and the people of Myanmar extend our warmest welcome to all of you. May I also on behalf of the people of Myanmar, would like to express our deep

appreciation to all of you for your presence and your readiness to provide aid and assistance to cyclone victims at this critical time.

I would also like to reiterate our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN member countries, Ministers and delegates from donor countries, Secretary-General of ASEAN and United Nations Agencies, representatives of INGOs and international community, for their presence today at the ASEAN-UN International Pledging Conference.

The Cyclone Nargis

that hit Myanmar on the 2nd and 3rd May, was of unprecedented intensity in our history. The radius of the storm was about 200 miles wide and the wind speed at the eye of the storm ranged from 120 to 150 miles per hour. The strong wind was accompanied by surging tidal waves that ranged from 7 to 12 feet in height.

Consequently, 7 townships in Ayeyawady Division and 40 townships in Yangon Division were severely affected. The strong winds and the accompanying high tidal waves have caused heavy losses of human lives, farming cattle, livestock as well as extensive damages to properties. Some of the villages were completely wiped out due to the storm and the tidal waves.

According to the data collected to date, 77,738 people were confirmed dead, 55,917 were still missing and 19,359 were injured and there were huge loss in properties and material damaged. I won't be going in details of the damages caused by the (See page 8)



Prime Minister General Thein Sein and the participants stand in one minute silence to mourn for the loss of lives of people in the storm.—MNA

Prime Minister General Thein Sein attends ...

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Cyclone Nargis as Minister U Soe Tha of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development will be giving a briefing on this later.

On 3rd May, the same day when the storm made its landfall, an emergency cabinet meeting was held presided by me and we rushed to the storm hit areas to carry out immediate rescue operations. On 4th May, at the supervision of the cabinet ministers many homeless victims totaling 1,064,623 were rescued and evacuated to temporary shelters at 12 front-line camps, 15 transit camps and 5 base camps. Emergency relief items such as food and drinking water are also delivered by using helicopters and boats, to some villages.

Up to now the emergency search and rescue measures have completed to some extent and we are currently carrying out relief and rehabilitation measures by providing food, clothing and shelters to the victims. Our efforts were greatly benefited from the large amount of humanitarian assistance that has poured

in from local and international wellwishers. To date, we have received 3273.20 tons of humanitarian supplies delivered by 221 cargo flights from international wellwishers from various countries and organizations. I would like to take this opportunity to convey my deep appreciation to donor countries and organizations for their goodwill and assistance in various ways. The material supplies that have been delivered by international donors were immediately distributed by using motorized boats, ships and helicopters to the victims of the cyclone.

While we are able to provide the storm victims with basic requirements such as food and clothing, the monsoon season is approaching and our present concern is to provide adequate temporary shelters for the victims, to enable them to resume their daily economic activities. We are now providing victims with shelters built using locally available bamboo and timber and using tarpaulin and plastics sheets as roofing materials. We are using the tents, tarpaulins and plastic sheets do-

minated from home and abroad to provide the necessary shelters.

For emergency relief and rehabilitation, the Government has allocated initial expenses of 5 billion Kyats to start with and so far the government has spent to the amount of 70 billion Kyats. Once again, I would like to reiterate our profound thanks to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his leadership in taking prompt action enabling the United Nations and its agencies to expeditiously and effectively assist in our relief and rehabilitation efforts.

Our appreciations also go to other donor Governments, International NGOs, NGOs and individual wellwishers for their financial and material contributions.

As we are able to carry out to a certain extent the first phase, which is the rescue, relief and providing temporary settlement, as a second step we are now at the same time implementing measures to assist the survivors to enable them to resume their livelihoods in agriculture, fisheries and salt productions; rebuilding of houses,

schools and dispensaries. For the survival for the cyclone victims we will need to provide them with cattle, hand and power tillers, paddy seedlings, fishing boats and gears and to rebuild salt production facilities.

The storm affected areas are not only important for providing food supply to Myanmar, but also contribute to international food supply. Due to the impact of cyclone, some farmlands and paddy fields have been damaged and can affect rice production. There will be sufficient supply of rice for Myanmar but will weaken the ability to contribute to world food supply. In order to remedy the situation, we will need to boost the rice production in other areas. For that purpose, we may need a large amount of fertilizer. Additionally, we may also need more fuel and hand and power tillers in rice cultivation to replace the cattle lost in the storm.

For the recovery of another major occupation in the storm-hit areas, the fishing industry, we also need fishing boats and vessels, fishing gear and fuel oil. Likewise, in the salt production, we will need to rebuild salt facilities, buildings and provide water pumps and to regroup skilled-workers. These measures are necessary in ensuring both domestic and international food supply.

In the rehabilitating phase, we need to rebuild houses, schools, dispensaries, religious and public buildings which were destroyed by the cyclone. We do have adequate supply of building materials such as wood, bamboo, cement, brick, sand, etc. and skilled

construction workers and business entrepreneurs within the country. Currently, over 6586 construction workers are already undertaking repair and construction works in the storm affected areas. In this regard, our priority requirements will be corrugated iron sheets for roofing materials and nails. It will greatly benefit the victims of the cyclone if such materials could be provided.

In line with the policy of the Government that achievements can be made with the close collaboration of the Government, people and members of the armed forces, under the leadership of the Government, the general public, businessmen, members of Tatmadaw (Armed Forces), police, members of Red Cross and Fire Brigade including the international non-governmental organizations are now joining their hands and striving their best in carrying out rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts to bring back normalcy in the storm affected areas in the shortest possible time.

In carrying out these tasks, we would warmly welcome any assistance and aid which are provided with genuine goodwill from any country or organization, provided that there are not strings attached nor politicization involved. Donation of relief supplies for the cyclone victims in Myanmar will be accepted through land route, by sea or by air. For the relief supplies coming by sea, I wish to inform that these supplies can be sent by civilian ships to the port of Yangon. For the storage of relief supplies we will allow storage at

the warehouses at the Yangon Airport and the port of Yangon which are designated as a transportation hubs. From there the government will facilitate transportation of these supplies to the affected areas. We will also facilitate those who wish to visit the cyclone stricken areas. For those groups who are interested in rehabilitation and reconstruction, my government is ready to accept them in accordance with our priority and the extent of work that need to be done. They will also be permitted township-wise separately.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our neighbours China, India, Bangladesh and ASEAN members such as Thailand, Laos and Singapore that have dispatched medical teams to provide medical care to the victims in order to prevent epidemics that we usually encounter in the aftermath of natural disaster. We will accept additional medical teams from other countries in an orderly and systematic manner.

In closing, I would like to invite experts and wellwishers to extend their help in our preventive measures such as raising the levels of embankments, building temporary shelters in high grounds and paving causeways through swampy areas linking villages etc in order to minimize casualties and damages in the event of such severe cyclone in the future. With your assistance I feel confident that we will be able to successfully overcome the challenge should we encounter similar cyclones.

I thank you all.—MNA



Mr John Holmes, Under Secretary-General of UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefs on donation of aid from UN and ASEAN.—MNA