
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 16

UNSG's SPECIAL ADVISER NAMBIAR CALLS ON PYIDAUNGSU HLUTTAW DEPUTY SPEAKER U MYA NYEIN & UNION MINISTERS

United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advisor, Mr. Vijay Nambiar called on Deputy Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U Mya Nyein on 12 May. On the same day, he held separate meetings with the Minister for Planning and Economic Development and Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, who was previously responsible for liaison between the SPDC and Aung San Suu Kyi. The UNSG Special Advisor also met with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the Secretary-General of the USDP party.¹

BURMA, NORWAY TO ENHANCE BILATERAL TIES & COOPERATION

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin received a Norwegian delegation led by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide at his office in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 May. The meeting focused on boosting bilateral ties and cooperation between Burma and Norway.²

UNION AGRICULTURE & IRRIGATION MINISTER RECEIVES EU COMMISSION GUESTS

A delegation led by Director Dirk Meganck from the European Commission's Directorate General of Development and Cooperation (Europe Aid) called on Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing on 12 May. At the meeting, they discussed the development of as well as mutual cooperation in the agriculture sector.³

CHIN STATE CHIEF MINISTER CALLS FOR COOPERATION WITH GOVERNMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Minister of Chin State U Hong Ngai visited the Laiva Power Plant and Ngasibva Hydropower Plant in Falam Township on 31 April as well as a communication station on Mount Thiri Ottama. Later, the Chief Minister visited a silk factory in Tiddim and provided cash assistance to patients at the local township People's Hospital. At the town hall, he met locals, senior citizens, departmental staff and explained the policies of the government and regional development undertakings, and called for full cooperation with the government. Chief Minister Hong Ngai also visited the Government Technical Training School, Women's Vocational Training School, and Youth Training School as part of his state tour.⁴

¹ UNSG's Special Adviser Calls on Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Mya Nyein, Union Ministers – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 May 2011 (p. 16)

² Myanmar, Norway to Enhance Bilateral Ties, Cooperation – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 May 2011 (p. 7)

³ Union A&I Minister Receives EU Commission Guests - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 May 2011 (p. 2)

⁴ Cooperation with Government for Regional Development Emphasized – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2011 (p. 9)

KACHIN STATE CHIEF MINISTER RECEIVES CHINESE AMBASSADOR, OFFICIAL FROM YUNNAN

The Chinese Ambassador to Burma Li Junhua called on the Chief Minister of Kachin State U La John Ngan Hsai on 30 April.⁵ A few days later, Chairman Wu Song of Baoshan Prefecture, Yunnan Province in China visited the Chief Minister on 4 May.⁶ Strong economic and political ties exist between the two regions, and Kachin State is the main trade route into Burma from China.

MON STATE CHIEF MINISTER CALLS FOR BRIBERY- & CORRUPTION-FREE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Chief Minister of Mon State U Ohn Myint has called on officials and staff of the Mon State Law Office to avoid bribery and corruption as part of efforts to pass sentences in legal cases correctly. At a ceremony to unveil the signboard of the office in Mawlamyine on 3 May, he also urged them to assist in legal cases correctly and lawfully and to digest the constitution and existing laws.⁷

SHAN STATE CHIEF MINISTER TOURS TACHILEIK, MONGHSAT

The Chief Minister of Shan State U Sao Aung Myat met departmental personnel in Tachilek on 5 May. In Tahlay, he met members of the work committee for rehabilitation at the rehabilitation station and inspected construction of a temporary hospital, main hospital, low-cost housings in Monglin Village-tract and Basic Education High School. He also inspected a camp of the Border Trade Department and border trading at No. 2 Myanmar-Thai Friendship Bridge in Tachilek and also visited an agricultural project for the implementation of 100 acres of summer paddy in the region.⁸

RAKHINE STATE TO CHANGE FARM WORK TO MECHANIZATION, TAKE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS DRILLS

The Chief Minister of Rakhine State U Hla Maung Tin has stressed the need for the mechanization of farm work in the state and has assured local farmers of providing agricultural technology and input as part of efforts to boost rice production. At a meeting with local rice dealers, town elders and departmental officials in Ponnagyun Township, Rakhine State on 4 May, U Hla Maung Tin also assured the participants of disaster preparedness drills in May as the rainy season is drawing near. Local authorities also reported to the Chief Minister on regional development tasks and rice millers on prospects for building modern rice mills in the state.⁹

⁵ Kachin State Chief Minister Receives Guests - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 May 2011 (p. 7)

⁶ Chief Minister of Kachin State receives Chairman of Baoshan Prefecture of Yunnan Province - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 May 2011 (p. 2)

⁷ Mon State Chief Minister Calls for Bribery, Corruption-Free Justice System – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 May 2011 (p. 9)

⁸ Chief Minister of Shan State tours Tachilek, Monghsat - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 May 2011 (p. 2)

⁹ Rakhine State to Change Farm Work to Mechanization, Takes Disaster Preparedness Drills – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 May 2011 (p. 8)

KACHIN STATE CHIEF MINISTER INSPECTS PHAKANT REGION DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The Chief Minister of Kachin State U La John Ngan Hsai inspected dredging works in Uru Creek near Lonkhin Village and Nammaphit Village in Phakant Township on 6 May. He later visited Phakant Township People's Hospital. On 7 May, he met staff, social organization members, locals and gem entrepreneurs at the Township General Administration Department and urged local entrepreneurs to work in accordance with existing laws.¹⁰

Other political news not reported in the official media

EU SEEKS DIALOGUE SAYS AMBASSADOR

At a Europe Day reception held in Rangoon on 3 May, David Lipman, Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, reiterated that the newly installed government would be judged on its actions and that the EU would encourage progress and respond to improvements in governance. However, he did not specify the details of the measures to be taken. Ambassador Lipman said in his speech that he hoped the new government would harness its potential for the benefit of the people of Burma, who have "long dreamt of greater pluralism, peace and prosperity." He added that "while the EU has recently decided to maintain certain restrictive measures for a further period of 12 months, there is a keen willingness to develop a high-level dialogue with the Myanmar government and relevant stakeholders across the spectrum." He also stated that based on the country's development needs the EU was also ready to increase humanitarian assistance and development aid, in order to improve the social and economic conditions of the people. In 2010, the EU provided more than US\$100 million in assistance for health, education, livelihoods, food security, environment and humanitarian needs.¹¹

NUP WILL TRY TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION AT NEXT PARLIAMENT SESSION

At a party meeting attended by 140 central committee members, the National Unity Party (NUP) has said that it will introduce legislation to amend the 2008 Constitution at the next session of parliament. While no specific details were given, the party's legal team is studying the possibilities. Other issues on the agenda included party goals, financial issues and public relations. Currently the party has over 700,000 members and in the November 2010 elections it won 64 seats, coming second to the USDP. The NUP is the official successor of the former Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) which ruled the country under Ne Win from 1962 to 1988. After the 1988 pro-democracy movement, the BSPP was removed from power. Following leadership changes, it was renamed the National Unity Party.¹²

USDP LEADER: NOVEMBER ELECTIONS JUST A SMOKE SCREEN

At a recent meeting held in Lashio, Northern Shan State, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) head Aung Thaung, a close aide of retired junta leader Than Shwe and a hardliner, told party members that last November's elections were a means to transfer power to the USDP. He said that "All the three sovereign powers: legislative, executive and judicial, have been vested in the USDP," and went on to promise that "since we have learned the strengths and weaknesses of each township, the USDP will be a runaway winner in the next elections (in 2015)." He added that since Aung San

¹⁰ Kachin State Chief Minister makes inspection of Phakant region development tasks - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 May 2011 (p. 8)

¹¹ EU seeks dialogue, says ambassador - <http://www.mmtimes.com/2011/news/574/news57406.html> (Myanmar Times) 9 May 2011

¹² NUP will try to amend the Constitution in next Parliament session - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/5249-nup-will-try-to-amend-the-constitution-in-next-parliament-session.html> (Mizzima) 11 May 2011

Suu Kyi's release from house arrest, she has not been allowed to engage in activities which could damage the USDP.¹³ The USDP was formed out of a civil society organization founded by the ruling military junta in 1993.

NDF SPLIT PROBED BY UNION ELECTION COMMISSION

The Union Election Commission (UEC) is investigating the dismissal of a senior National Democratic Force (NDF) party member. Central Executive Committee member Thein Nyunt was dismissed for allegedly giving restricted information to the media. Party leader Khin Maung Swe was summoned by the UEC to help establish whether the removal was done in accordance with party rules. The UEC will also decide if Thein Nyunt can continue to operate as an MP under the NDF flag. Both Khin Maung Swe and Thein Nyunt have presented their cases to the UEC and Thein Nyunt has said that he will accept the UEC's final decision. The NDF broke away from the National League for Democracy in order to contest the November elections last year and won 16 seats.¹⁴

RAKHINE STATE CHIEF MINISTER SAYS STATE IS FOR RAKHINES AND MUSLIMS

In a recent visit to Maungdaw, the Chief Minister for Rakhine State Hla Maung Tin said that Rakhine State is a place for both Rakhine and Muslim people. He urged those attending a meeting of local officials, town elders and Maulana (religious leaders) from 12 villages in the Maungdaw region to refrain from taking part in anti-government activities and for the local populace to live peacefully with one another. The Director of the Nasaka (Border Management Unit), Lt Col Aung Gyi, also briefed those assembled on on-going local administrative matters and thanked those who had voted for the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in the elections in November 2010. The Chief Minister was accompanied by the head of USDP for Rakhine State as well as state government officials.¹⁵

ANALYSIS

The tours and visits by the Chief Ministers of State in the Regions/States in recent weeks are clear indications reflecting the new government's intentions to attempt to garner support as it strives to bring change within the country. While mere outings and visits to infrastructure projects will not be enough to convince its many critics, the authorities, on their part, will surely need to provide more substantive and concrete steps if they are to prove them wrong. The recent meetings between the Kachin State Chief Minister and the Chinese Ambassador as well as officials from Baoshan Prefecture in Yunnan Province once again reflect the importance and role of engagement order to maintain stability and cooperation at all levels. With the international community keen to judge the new government at all possible turns, the recent statement by EU Ambassador David Lipman is but a welcome step in the right direction. While the remarks may not sound pleasing to some, the intentions with which they have been conveyed would provide an opportunity for the new government to seize and engage with the EU and others in striving to promote development and bring change to the country.

¹³ USDP Leader : November Elections Just A Blind – http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3662:usdp-leader-november-elections-just-a-blind&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald Agency for News - SHAN) 5 May 2011

¹⁴ NDF Split Probed By Election Body - <http://www.dvb.no/news/ndf-split-probed-by-election-body/15488> (DVB) 3 May 2011

¹⁵ State Chief Minister visits Maungdaw - http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3181:state-chief-minister-visits-maungdaw&catid=136:may-2011&Itemid=2 (Kaladan Press Network) 13 May 2011