
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 18

OFFICIAL MEDIA

VICE-PRESIDENT THIIHA THURA U TIN AUNG MYINT OO RECEIVES US SENATOR McCAIN

Vice-President of Myanmar Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo received a US delegation led by Senator John McCain at the hall of the President Office on 1 June. Also present on the occasion were Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin, Deputy Minister for Defence Captain Aung Thaw, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint, Adviser at the President's Office U Ko Ko Hlaing, Director-General U Min Zaw of the President's Office, U Kyaw Kyaw of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as other departmental officials. Senator McCain and his party were accompanied by Charge d'Affaires ai of the US Embassy Mr. Larry M. Dinger and Military Attaché Colonel Brey R. Sloan. During the meeting, Vice- President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo and Senator John McCain exchanged views on the promotion of bilateral ties and cooperation between the two countries.¹

While Senator McCain's trip to Burma is not as an official envoy from the U.S. government, the nature of his important role in imposing sanctions on the Burmese government and his influential status in the U.S. senate makes the visit a significant one.

US SENATOR McCAIN MEETS SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENTS

Visiting US Senator John McCain and his party called on the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw (People's Parliament) Thura U Shwe Mann and Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) U Khin Aung Myint on 1 June in Nay Pyi Taw. Also present during the meetings were Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint, parliament committee members comprising of various political parties and ethnic groups and officials of the Hluttaw office. The Senator and his party were accompanied by Charge d'Affaires a.i. of the US Embassy to Myanmar Mr Larry M. Dinger.²

The Senator also met elected MPs Dr. Aye Maung, Dr. Myat Nyana Soe, U Nyunt Tin and Daw Nan Wah Nu.

UNION FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES US SENATOR McCAIN

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin received the United States delegation led by Senator John McCain at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Minister's Office in Nay Pyi Taw on 1 June. They discussed the promotion of bilateral relations and mutual interests. Also present were Deputy Minister Dr. Myo Myint and directors-general of the ministry. The Senator was accompanied by Charge d'Affaires ai Mr. Larry M. Dinger of the US Embassy. In the afternoon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Myo Myint hosted a luncheon in honour of the visiting US Senator and his party at Thingaha Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw.³

¹ Vice-President Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo receives US Senator John McCain - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 June 2011 (p. 1)

² Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives US Senator and party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 June 2011 (p. 7) & Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker receives US Senator and party- <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 June 2011 (p. 10)

³ Union FM receives US Senator - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 June 2011 (p. 2)

FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES GERMAN DELEGATION

Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin received a delegation of German foundations at his office on 30 May, led by the German Ambassador Julius Georg Luy. The meeting focused on the strengthening bilateral ties and cooperation between Burma and Germany.⁴

According to local media, although not confirmed by state-run media, the delegation included representatives from six foundations which are known to be affiliated with major political parties in Germany. The Friedrich Ebert Foundations (the Social Democratic Party - SPD), the Heinrich Böll Foundation (the Green Party - Die Grünen), the Friedrich Neumann Stiftung (the Free Democratic Party - FDP), the Hanns Seidel Foundation (the Christian Social Union – CSU), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (the Christian Democratic Union – CDU), and the foundation of Die Linke (The Left).

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN ATTENDS NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION

President U Thein Sein delivered an address at the opening ceremony of National Level Workshop on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw on 20 May. Also present were Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, Union Ministers, deputy ministers, Ministers of Regions and States, departmental heads and invited guests. Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo also attended the second day session. At the four-day workshop focused on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation, a total of 26 papers were submitted and discussed by the various speakers and governmental officials including Presidential Economic Advisors U Myint, U Hset Aung and Dr. Sein Hla Bo. The five main topics of discussions at the workshop included: 1) the development of the agricultural sector, 2) the development of the livestock breeding sector, 3) the development of rural product and cottage industries and income generation activities, 4) development of micro finances, and 5) the development of rural cooperative societies. In conclusion, Union Ministers U Tin Naing Thein, U Kyaw Hsan, U Myint Hlaing, U Soe Thein, U Aung Kyi, U Win Myint, Dr Mya Aye and U Ohn Myint and those present made suggestions to draw up a plan of action to address poverty alleviation and rural development.⁵

UNION HEALTH MINISTER RECEIVES AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR AND PRESIDENT OF SUPPORT FUND MYANMAR

Union Minister for Health Dr Pe Thet Khin received Australian Ambassador Bronte Nadine Moules and President Yve Callebaut of Support Fund Myanmar separately at his office on 25 May. With the Australian Ambassador he discussed cooperation in fighting three major diseases, maternal and child health care and cooperation with UN agencies. In his meeting with Support Fund Myanmar (Belgium), the Minister discussed issues on procurement of medical equipment as well as cooperation in health, education and agriculture development and exchange of technology between universities from the Belgium and Burma.⁶

⁴ FM receives German delegation - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 May 2011 (p. 2)

⁵ President U Thein Sein attends opening of National Level Workshop on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 May 2011 (p. 16 & 7) / (Speech) Rural production and economic growth engine of national economic development - Data of UNDP and relevant department, shows poverty falling in Myanmar - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 May 2011 (p. 1, 8, 9) / Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo attends second day session of National Level Workshop on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 May 2011 (p. 1 & 8) / Third-day session of National Level Workshop on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation held - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 May 2011 (p. 1 & 8)

⁶ Union Health Minister receives Australian Ambassador, President of Support Fund Myanmar - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-26.pdf> (NLM) 26 May 2011 (p.9)

GERMAN AMBASSADOR MEETS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

Union Minister for Border Affairs and for Myanmar Industrial Development Maj-Gen Thein Htay received German Ambassador Julius Georg Luy at the Ministry of Border Affairs on 30 May. Officials from Ministry of Border Affairs and Ministry of Myanmar Industrial Development attended the meeting.⁷

The meeting focused on promoting bilateral cooperation between the two countries. While the scope of the Ministry of the Industrial Development has yet to be defined, the Germans will no doubt use the meeting with the minister as an opportunity in further expanding its interests within the country.

SWISS AMBASSADOR MEETS GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

The Swiss Ambassador to Myanmar Christoph Burgener met with government ministers responsible for Foreign Affairs, Industrial Development and Health at the Ministers' offices in Nay Pyi Taw. In the three meetings, they discussed respectively 1) the promotion and strengthening of bilateral ties between the two countries, 2) promotion and cooperation in humanitarian aid with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in border areas, as well as 3) the construction of rural health centres, sharing medical knowledge, donation of medicines and medical equipment, cooperation in control of infectious disease and non-infectious disease, resettlements in delta region, and taking measures against health problems in cooperation with social organizations.⁸

PYITHU HLUTTAW SPEAKER RECEIVES POLITBURO MEMBER OF CPC CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann received Politburo member Mr. Li Yuanchao of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and his party at Zabuthiri Hall in Nay Pyi Taw Hluttaw Building on 2 June. Also present were representatives of the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw and officials of Hluttaw Office. The visiting delegation was accompanied by the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Li Junhua.⁹

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND REGION/STATE PARLIAMENT SPEAKERS DISCUSS PROCEDURES

Members of Pyithu Hluttaw (Peoples Parliament) and Amyotha Hluttaw (National Parliament) Committees and Speakers of Region/State Hluttaws held discussions on Hluttaw procedures during a 4-day meeting from 23 to 26 May. The meeting was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint, Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swar, Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Mya Nyein, members of Bill Committees, Public Accounts Committees, Rights Committees and Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committees of Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw and speakers of Region/State Hluttaws. Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann gave speeches on Hluttaw procedures. During the four day session the committee members MPs discussed topics and work of the recent parliamentary session held in March and future work programmes.¹⁰

⁷ Union Minister for Border Affairs and for Myanmar Industrial Development receives German Ambassador - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 May 2011 (p.2)

⁸ Union Minister for Border Affairs and for MID receives Swiss Ambassador (p. 2), Union Foreign Affairs Minister receives Swiss Delegation (p. 2) & Union Health Minister receives Swiss Ambassador to Myanmar (p.7) - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 June 2011

⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Politburo member of CPC Central Committee - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 June 2011 (p. 9)

¹⁰ Pyithu Hluttaw/Amyotha Hluttaw Committees members, Region/State Hluttaw speakers discuss Hluttaw procedures - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-24.pdf> (NLM) 24 May 2011 (p. 16) / Discussion on Hluttaw

RUMFCCI TO COOPERATE WITH HANNS SEIDEL FOUNDATION

A delegation from the German Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) comprised of Christian Hegemer, Director of the Institute of Foreign Relations, and Axel Neubert, Regional Representative for Vietnam and Myanmar, called on the President of Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (RUMFCCI), U Win Aung, and senior officials at the federation's office on 18 May. They discussed matters related to cooperation between the two organizations with the aim of the HSF providing assistance for social and economic development projects in ASEAN countries, technologies in promoting private economic sector, opening of on-job training courses, light- and medium-scale industries, agricultural tasks and joint conducting of course for human resources development.¹¹

As reported in the last EBO Political Monitor, the HSF delegation, including the Chairman of Hans Seidel Foundation Dr. h. c. mult. Hans Zehetmair and the German Minister of Economy Michael Glos, also recently met with Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin.¹² In addition, the delegation also met Aung San Suu Kyi. Dr. Zehetmair said he hoped Germany would engage more in Burma's reform process.¹³

CANDIDATE DAW BAUK JA WITHDRAWS ELECTION OBJECTION PAPER

Daw Bauk Ja, who stood for elections in Phakant Constituency, Kachin State, has decided to withdraw her official complaint filed against U Ohn Myint of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) from the same constituency. Initially, Daw Bauk Ja had requested the Union Election Commission to look into the matter and a tribunal was established to look into the matter accordingly. After a tribunal hearing held on 30 May, Daw Bauk Ja submitted a request for the case to be withdrawn in line with Order 23 and Rule 1 of the Code of Civil Procedures. The electoral tribunal has accepted Bauk Ja's request to formally close the case and will do so in accordance with Pyithu Hluttaw Election Rule 96 (a).¹⁴

OUTSIDE MEDIA SOURCES

WHITE TIGER PARTY TO COOPERATE WITH THAI COMPANY FOR MINING IN SHAN STATE

The Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), better known as the White Tiger party, is planning to work together with some Thai companies in mining projects in Shan State as well as other business projects, according to party's finance chief Sao Than Myint. Apart from mining projects, the companies have also proposed to help to develop local community projects in the agricultural sector. While the two sides have yet to make an agreement on the activities to be undertaken, the party's executive body will also be required to give its final decision on the issue. Currently, the Thai companies have expressed their interest to work in eastern and southern Shan State, which share common borders with Thailand. If the joint venture goes ahead, the party will need to seek the

procedures among Pyithu Hluttaw/Amyotha Hluttaw Committees members, Region/State Hluttaws Speakers continues - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-25.pdf> (NLM) 25 May 2011 (p. 9) / Discussion on Hluttaw procedures among Pyithu Hluttaw/Amyotha Hluttaw Committees members, Region/State Hluttaw Speakers continues for third day <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-26.pdf> (NLM) 26 May 2011 (p. 1) / Discussion on Hluttaw procedures among Pyithu Hluttaw/Amyotha Hluttaw Committees members, Region/State Hluttaws Speakers continues for fourth day <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 May 2011 (p. 2)

¹¹ RUMFCCI to cooperate with Hanns Seidel Foundation in various sectors -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-05-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 May 2011 (p. 7)

¹² [http://euro-burma.eu/doc/PM_No. 17 - 30-05-11.pdf](http://euro-burma.eu/doc/PM_No.17-30-05-11.pdf)

¹³ Press release of the Hanns Seidel Foundation: [Pressemitteilung vom 20. Mai 2011 "Aung San Suu Kyi empfängt Delegation der Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung"](http://www.hanns-seidel-stiftung.de/Pressemitteilung_vom_20_Mai_2011_Aung_San_Suu_Kyi_empfaengt_Delegation_der_Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung/) – 20 May 2011

¹⁴ Candidate Daw Bauk Ja withdraws election objection paper - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 June 2011 (p. 10)

approval of both the regional and union governments. At the same time, the impact of environmental problems on the local people will also have to be considered, said party's finance chief Sao Than Myint.¹⁵

MILITARY, REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS AT ODDS OVER BUSINESS CONCESSIONS

Business conflicts have formed between regional commanders of the Burmese army and leaders of newly formed regional governments over control of lucrative concessions, according to business sources.

The owner of a gold-mining operation in Sagaing Region said that the relationship between Maj-Gen Soe Lwin, the commander of the Northwestern Regional Command, and Sagaing Region Chief Minister Thar Aye has soured in recent months over the latter's efforts to assert control over local mining concessions, warning mine owners who received permission to operate from Soe Lwin that their business activities were unlawful. "At a meeting with mine owners, Thar Aye warned those who were working under the permission of the northwestern regional commander, but said nothing to the others," the gold-mine owner said. A number of companies, including the Htoo Trading Company owned by junta crony Tay Za and a company owned by movie actor Lwin Moe, have received permission to engage in gold mining along the Chindwin River in Banmauk, Kawlin, Wuntho and Kani townships in Sagaing Region from the Northwestern Regional Command and the Ministry of Mines. Sources in Monywa Township, also in Sagaing Region, said that business owners there now prefer to seek concessions from members of the newly formed regional government, rather than deal with military officials, including regional commanders.

In Mandalay Region, Chief Minister Ye Myint has also upset a regional military commander, Maj-Gen Ye Aung, who heads the Central Regional Command. Ye Myint's decision to order the seizure of vehicles operating without proper documentation riled Ye Aung because it affected a number of his business associates, according to a business source in Mandalay.

Ye Myint, Thar Aye and Rangoon Region Chief Minister Myint Swe are all former Special Military Operations commanders who held the ranks of lieutenant general. However, some business people predict that the influence of regional commanders will continue to wane under the new civilian government, which consists almost entirely of former military personnel.¹⁶

ETHNIC POLITICAL PARTIES PLAN TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON ETHNIC EDUCATION IN PARLIAMENT

Five ethnic political parties have agreed to submit a proposal during the next parliament session to teach ethnic languages at government schools as part of the curriculum. Nai Ngwe Thein, the chairman of the All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMRDP), said, "We have written the proposal very well so they [the new government] cannot reject it this time. We will propose [this issue] at the next session of parliament." The five political parties are the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), the AMRDP, the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP), the Chin National Party (CNP) and the Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party. The group has agreed on the following three languages to be taught in schools: Burmese, the local ethnic language, and English. In March, during the first session of parliament in Nay Pyi, Banya Aung Moe, an AMRDP MP in the National Parliament, submitted a request for ethnic languages to be taught in government schools. Citing grounds of lack of information and inability to answer questions relating to the current ethnic

¹⁵ White Tiger party to cooperate with Thai Company for mining in Shan State - http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3722:white-tiger-party-to-cooperate-with-thai-company-for-mining-in-shan-state&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 25 May 2011

¹⁶ Military, Regional governments at Odds over Business Concessions - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=21373 (Irrawaddy) 27 May 2011

education system, his proposal was rejected. Mon community leaders have said that ethnic education is also important and should be taught during the new government, but most believe that the new government will not add ethnic education as an academic subject at the government schools. Ethnic education in Burmese government schools existed until the military coup in 1962 and has been banned ever since.¹⁷

ANALYSIS

The recent visit by US Senator McCain to Burma and his meeting with government leaders and opposition groups alike will have provided him with a better understanding of the on-going political developments inside the country. Relations between the two countries have been strained since the military crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in 1988, and the US has since led the charge on criticising and exerting pressure on the regime. However, since the shift by the Obama administration to pursue a more pro-engagement policy with the junta, visits by senior US officials will pave the way to normalising the strained relations. While the US has taken steps to improve relations with Burma, its European allies have also been busy engaging the government in Nay Pyi Taw. Meetings between government ministers, delegations from German foundations, as well as the Swiss Ambassador are signs that the Europeans do not wish to be left out of the process of engagement. According to state-media, the meetings have focussed on promoting bilateral relations and providing humanitarian assistance to the country. Such initiatives and activities will raise the ire of the anti-junta community. With the country still in transition as it strives to establish a democratic system, it will not be easy to accommodate all the concerns.

The initiative by the All Mon Region Democratic Party (AMRDP) along with other ethnic political parties to submit a proposal to introduce ethnic language teaching at the next parliamentary session should be welcomed and followed closely. Although the outcome may not prove to be worthwhile, the process itself can provide a basis to nurture democratic practice. Once again, it has to be said that Burma's road to democracy and change will not be easy. A compromise by all, including the authorities, ethnic groups and opposition parties, is needed if there is to be genuine change within the country.

¹⁷ Ethnic Political Parties Plan to Submit Proposal on Ethnic Education in Parliament - <http://monnews.org/?p=2903> (IMNA)
3 June 2011