

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 20

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN RECEIVES VISITING INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

President U Thein Sein received a delegation led by Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of India S.M. Krishna and party at the hall of the President Office on 22 June 2011. Also present at the meeting were Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister at the President's Office U Soe Maung and departmental heads. The visiting Indian delegation was accompanied by Indian Ambassador Dr Villur Sundararajan Seshadri. The visiting Indian delegation also paid courtesy calls on Vice-President U Tin Aung Myint Oo, Speaker of People's Parliament Thura Shwe Mann and Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint.¹

EU DELEGATION MEETS VICE-PRESIDENT AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo received a European Union delegation led by Robert Cooper, Director-General, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, at his office in Nay Pyi Taw on 20 June. Also present were Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint, Deputy Minister for Labour U Myint Thein, Director-General of the Government Office U Tin Myo Kyi. The visiting EU delegation also met Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin and Deputy Minister for Health Dr. Win Myint separately during the visit. The two sides focused on strengthening relations and cooperation between Burma and the EU as well as cooperation on matters relating to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.²

VICE PRESIDENT AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS RECEIVE RUSSIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER

Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo received a Russian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister of the Russian Federation Alexey N. Borodavkin at the President Office on 22 June. Also present were Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister for Science and Technology U Aye Myint, Director-General of the President Office U Min Zaw as well as departmental heads. Minister Borodavkin was also accompanied by Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Myanmar Mikhail Mgeladze. The Russian delegation also held separate meetings with the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann and Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin and discussed the promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries.³

¹ President U Thein Sein receives Indian delegation led by Minister of External Affairs of Republic of India Mr. S.M. Krishna – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 June 2011 (p. 1), Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo receives Indian goodwill delegation led by Minister of External Affairs <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 June 2011 (p. 8), Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives Indian Delegation - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 June 2011 (p. 8), & Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw receives Indian Minister of External Affairs Mr. S. M. Krishna - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 June 2011 (p. 10)

² Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo receives EU delegation – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 June 2011 (p. 2), Myanmar, European Union to boost cooperation and relations - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 June 2011 (p. 2), & Director-General, General Secretariat of EU Council calls on Dy Health Minister - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 June 2011 (p. 2)

³ Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo receives Russian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Alexey N. Borodavkin - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 June 2011 (p. 16),

RUSSIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ATTENDS ASEAN-RUSSIA SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING AND CONSULTATION OF BURMESE RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRIES

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Alexey N. Borodavkin, attended the 5th Regular Consultations between Burma and the Russia Federation in Rangoon on 22 June, where the two delegations discussed the promotion of friendship, bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries, enhancement of cooperation in regional and international organizations and also exchanged views on current international issues.⁴

As part of his visit, the Deputy Foreign Minister also attended the 8th ASEAN-Russia Senior Officials' Meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw. The participants discussed the development of ASEAN and Russian cooperation, exchanged views on regional and international issues and reviewed ASEAN- Russia Dialogue relations. They also discussed plans for the future including the implementation of a ASEAN-Russia energy cooperation work plan, cooperation in countering terrorism, working on emergency management, implementation of Comprehensive Programme of Action Plan to Promote Cooperation between ASEAN and Russia Federation 2005- 2015 for mutual interests, a road map of trade and economic cooperation, as well as exchanges in the fields of science and technology. The participants agreed to hold the 9th ASEAN-Russia Senior Officials' Meeting in Russia in 2012.⁵

OUTSIDE MEDIA

ELECTION COMMISSION THREATENS TO DISSOLVE NDF DUE TO ACTIVITIES OF MEMBER DAW BAUK JA

The Election Commission has threatened politician-activist Daw Bauk Ja that her political party could be dissolved due to her advocacy for 19 Kachin students in Rangoon who had been ordered to return home. According to Rangoon Region Election Commission Secretary U Myint Swe, the activities of Daw Bauk Ja were deemed a threat to national unity and therefore some National Democratic Force (NDF) CEC members had been summoned to discuss the matter. The conflict began when local authorities in Rangoon refused to renew the permits (guest registration) of some Kachin students studying there and ordered them to return home. No reason was given, but the order came at about the time of the outbreak of renewed fighting between the government and Kachin forces. The students are living in a rented house in Bogyoke village in Thanlyin Township.

Daw Bauk Ja took up their case and advocated for them through the exile media. According to NDF committee member U Khin Maung Swe, Daw Bauk Ja, who is from Phakant Township, had actively worked for the people even before joining the party. "I believe she represented the students in good faith and has no ill will toward the state. She told the students' story and your media covered this news. We know that she stands for national reconciliation", he said. "The commission might misunderstand her, or they might have fears because of her interviews", U Khin Maung Swe added. An on-going investigation is now being conducted by the local authorities regarding the students' case. The students say they want to remain in their rented house and attend school, but if they cannot get their guest registration renewed by the local authorities they could be arrested.⁶

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw receives Russian Dy Foreign Affairs Minister - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 June 2011 (p. 8) &

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs receives Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 June 2011 (p. 2)

⁴ Fifth Regular Consultations between foreign ministries of Myanmar and Russian Federation held - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 June 2011 (p. 8) &

⁵ 8th ASEAN-Russia Senior Officials' Meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-24.pdf> (NLM) 24 June 2011 (p. 2)

⁶ Election Commission threatens to dissolve Bauk Ja's political party - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/5461-election-commission-threatens-to-dissolve-bauk-jas-political-party.html> (Mizzima) 21 June 2011

ELECTORAL LAWS A “WORRY” SAYS DEMOCRATIC PARTY (MYANMAR) GENERAL-SECRETARY

After losing her case against a candidate from the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), Democratic Party (Myanmar) General-Secretary Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein said that the current electoral laws are a cause of concern and a “worry”. Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein had filed objections in regards to alleged malpractices committed by the rival USDP candidate. After the Election Commission hearing, Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein said, “I filed the suit believing in justice and truth. But I found out in the last stage of this struggle that I am not entitled to enjoy the provisions written in the electoral laws”. She has now been ordered to pay 500,000 kyat (US\$ 637) as costs to the defendant. At the same time she has also lost a non-refundable deposit of 1 million kyat (US\$ 1,274) due to the decision. It is not yet clear whether Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein plans to file an appeal against the ruling. “In the forthcoming by-elections and in future elections, in which laws can we trust for contesting the election and which people can we trust and rely on? I have no idea”, she said.⁷

ANALYSIS

The visit to Burma led by a senior EU official will certainly raise the eyebrows of many democracy activists. While engagement with the regime is not yet acceptable to many, the visit will provide the EU with a much clearer understanding of the government installed in Nay Pyi Taw. In the past, the US together along with the EU and others have taken hard-line positions in dealing with Burma. However, recent visits by senior officials from western nations including US Senator McCain send a clear signal to the new government that the international community is open for dialogue. How the regime responds remains to be seen. Recent visits by Russian and Indian officials further provide an indication of the widespread interest of the international community in the new government in Burma. An interesting development in the internal dynamics of the government is that Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo seems to be taking on a higher profile and a more active role than one would normally expect from a Vice-president. Whether or not this will enable the new government to more actively implement reforms remains to be seen.

⁷ Electoral laws a “worry”, says Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/5490-electoral-laws-a-worry-says-cho-cho-kyaw-nyein.html> (Mizzima) 24 June 2011