

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 23

OFFICIAL MEDIA

SECOND REGULAR SESSION SUMMONED FOR HLUTTAW

Announcements to convene the Second Regular Sessions of the Pyidaungsu (Union) Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) were issued as follows:

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw
Notification No. (1/2011)
2nd Waxing of Wagaung 1373 ME
1 August 2011**

Summoning first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw second regular session

In accord with Section 79 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 13 of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law, it is hereby announced that the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw second regular session is summoned on the 8th Waning of Wagaung 1373 ME (22 August 2011) (Monday).¹

**Sd/ Khin Aung Myint
Speaker
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw**

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Pyithu Hluttaw
Notification No. (1/2011)
2nd Waxing of Wagaung 1373 ME
1 August 2011**

Summoning first Pyithu Hluttaw second regular session

In accord with Section 126 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 34 of Pyithu Hluttaw Law, it is hereby announced that the first Pyithu Hluttaw second regular session is summoned on the 8th Waning of Wagaung 1373 ME (22 August 2011) (Monday).²

**Sd/ Thura Shwe Mann
Speaker
Pyithu Hluttaw**

¹ First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw second regular session summoned -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 August 2011 (p.1)

² First Pyithu Hluttaw second regular session summoned -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 August 2011 (p.1)

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Amyotha Hluttaw
Notification No. (1/2011)
2nd Waxing of Wagaung 1373 ME
1 August 2011**

Summoning first Amyotha Hluttaw second regular session

In accord with Section 155 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 34 of Amyotha Hluttaw Law, it is hereby announced that the first Amyotha Hluttaw second regular session is summoned on the 8th Waning of Wagaung 1373 ME (22 August 2011) (Monday).³

**Sd/ Khin Aung Myint
Speaker
Amyotha Hluttaw**

SHAN STATE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ECONOMY RESIGNS

The President Office of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar issued Order No. 44/2011 dated 1 August 2011 was issued announcing the official resignation of the Minister for Planning and Economy of the Shan State, U Thaung Shwe.⁴

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
President Office
Order No. (44/2011)
2nd Waxing of Wagaung 1373 ME
1 August 2011**

Resignation as Shan State Minister approved

Minister for Planning and Economy of Shan State Government U Thaung Shwe appointed in accord with Section 262, Subsection (c) and (f) of the constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 8, Subsection (g) of Region or State Government Law is permitted to resign as Shan State Minister of his own volition in accord with Section 264, Subsection (a) of the constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 52, Subsection (b) of Region or State Government Law.

**Sd/ Thein Sein
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

PEOPLE DEMOCRACY PARTY OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED BY UEC FOR REMONSTRATION

On 4 August 2011 the Union Election Commission (UEC) made an announcement in the New Light of Myanmar that the People Democracy Party (PDP), with its head office situated at No. 39/B in Yay-thant Area of Tagundaing Ward in Pyi-gyi-dagun Township, Mandalay Region, submitted its applications for registration as a political party under Article 5 of Political Parties Registration Law on 3 August 2011. The announcement described the party's name, flag, and seal and in accord with Political Parties Registration Rules 14 (d), stated that if there is anyone who wants to remonstrate (sic) about the name,

³ First Amyotha Hluttaw second regular session summoned –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 August 2011 (p. 1)

⁴ Shan State Minister for Planning and Economy resigns –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 August 2011 (p. 1)

⁵ Public announcement for remonstrations -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 August 2011 (p. 2)

flag and seal of the party, they may remonstrate (sic) with the Union Election Commission with firm evidence within seven days from the date of the announcement.⁵



People Democracy Party Flag



People Democracy Party Seal

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

INDONESIAN FM TO VET BURMA FOR ASEAN CHAIR

Indonesia's Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa is set to visit Burma in the near future with observers saying that Nay Pyi Taw's bid to chair the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2014 may rest on his conclusions. According to Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Michael Tene, the Indonesian FM has already received an official invitation from Burma and is preparing a mission to evaluate whether the Burmese government has made enough democratic progress to win backing for its ASEAN chairmanship. However, Kavi Chongkittavorn, a senior editor of the Bangkok-based daily the Nation said, *"He [Natalegawa] will go only if Burma has made satisfactory progress. Otherwise, he will not go. That much is clear."* On a more negative note, Kavi expressed his doubts that the visit will take place as the Indonesian Foreign Minister had yet to confirm. However, he added, if the Indonesian FM does go to Burma, then Nay Pyi Taw can take it for granted that it will chair ASEAN in 2014. Kavi also added that the releasing of political prisoners, a cease-fire with ethnic groups and a dialogue towards national reconciliation would be needed as preconditions.⁶

SUU KYI INVITED TO STATE POVERTY WORKSHOP

According to government sources, Aung San Suu Kyi will be invited to the National Level Workshop on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation scheduled to be held in Nay Pyi Taw later in August. Nay Zin Latt, a member of the President's Political Advisory Group, speaking to the media said that consideration had been given to invite Aung San Suu Kyi to attend the workshop as an observer rather than as General-Secretary of the National League for Democracy (NLD). He added that the President's Office and the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development would be responsible for inviting Suu Kyi to the workshop. Responding to the claim, NLD spokesman Ohn Kyaing said the party was unaware of the invitation. *"But if any development is positive for dialogue and national reconciliation, we would welcome it,"* he added. The possibility of Suu Kyi's invitation comes a week after ex-Maj-Gen Aung Kyi, current Minister for Labor & Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, met the Nobel Laureate at a government guesthouse in Rangoon. After the meeting, state media reported: *"The two sides are optimistic about and satisfied with the dialogue. They held talks about opportunities for both sides to work together for the well-being of the public. The discussion included matters for the rule of law, elimination of disagreement and serving national interest."* *"The joint-statement of U Aung Kyi and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi means there is a common agreement,"* Nay Zin Latt said about the meeting. *"There were [previous] meetings between U Aung Kyi and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. But they were just supporting steps, not a common agreement,"* he added, but did not provide precise details of

⁶ Indonesia's FM to vet Burma for Asean chair - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=21845 (Irrawaddy) 5 August 2011

the agreement. Although there is no official confirmation by NLD leaders, party sources said in the past there had been at least three meetings between the presidential advisors and Suu Kyi as well as senior NLD figures before the pro-democracy icon's meeting with minister Aung Kyi on 25 July. Other political sources in Rangoon said U Myint, who is an economic adviser to the President and also a close friend of Suu Kyi, is thought to be the driving force in persuading the authorities to include the opposition leader to attend the event in Nay Pyi Taw.⁷

SUU KYI URGED TO SUPPORT BURMA'S CONSTITUTION-BASED POLITICS

Aung San Suu Kyi should play a greater role in electoral politics and the National League for Democracy (NLD) should become more pragmatic according to National Unity Party (NUP) Chairman Han Shwe. In a message sent to the NLD by Han Shwe and other political party leaders, he added that working for political change and reform within the Parliament can improve the political process. *"Peace issues regarding ethnic nationalities can be worked on and talked about in the Parliament. Working within this institution is more efficient than working outside it,"* Han Shwe said. He noted that the government has said that the Parliament process is a step toward disciplined democracy, but the NLD has argued that the 2008 Constitution was drafted unilaterally by the then-ruling military regime, which took power by a coup. The NLD does not recognize the roadmap to democracy and did not take part in last year's election. Han Shwe's call conflicts with a recent letter sent by the Home Ministry to the NLD warning that it should not take part in political activities because it is not a registered political party. The NLD has said that it will raise the issue in the UN, contending that the current government is oppressing and restricting its democratic right of freedom of association granted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The NUP, which inherited the political legacy of the Burma Socialist Programme Party which was overthrown by a 1988 popular uprising, said that people should give the process a few years and see what improvements might occur. *"They must work on the principle of division of powers. If they ignore this principle and follow a centralized form, we also won't accept them. We will oppose them too. Working through Constitution-based politics is our party's policy. So we will work with and follow the Constitution,"* said Han Shwe.⁸

USDP POLITICIAN URGES GOVT ACTION ON COMMODITY PRICES

A Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) representative says he is "pleased" with some measures adopted by the new government but has urged more progress on ensuring farmers get a fair price for their crops. U Ko Gyi, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Aung-mya-ythazan constituency and a well-known figure in the Mandalay business community, said that the new government had made tangible progress on several issues in its first months in power. *"One hundred days is just a short time but there have been developments ... such as reducing export taxes, increasing pension rates and focusing on education more than in the past. So far I'm pleased with the performance of new government,"* he said. However, he added that farmers were facing difficulties because of falling prices, particularly on the export market. The main reason is the appreciation of the Kyat, which has made agricultural products unprofitable on export markets and dampened domestic prices. *"I know the issues between farmers, traders and businessmen because I used to work in the crop trading and [edible] oil industry. Despite the fact export taxes have been reduced 3 percent, exporters and importers are still*

⁷ Suu Kyi invited to State Poverty Workshop - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=21820 (Irrawaddy) 2 August 2011

⁸ Suu Kyi urged to support Burma's Constitution-based politics - <http://mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/5718-suu-kyi-urged-to-support-burmas-constitution-based-politics.html> (Mizzima) 3 August 2011

struggling due to the low [US dollar] rate,” he said. “Farmers are not able to cover both cultivation expenses and their cost of living because the foreign exchange rates are in decline. Export taxes should be reduced further; this initiative can ensure prices are high enough to motivate the farmers.”

Few parliamentarians have more business experience than U Ko Gyi, who has worked for various trade organisations over the past three decades, serving as vice Chairman of the Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chairman of the Mandalay Region Oil Dealers Association, and an Executive Committee member of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. U Ko Gyi said parliamentarians familiar with the business sector had a responsibility to inform ministers about the “*actual situation*” of domestic commodity markets and lobby for positive changes. “*Being Pyithu Hluttaw representatives, we need to take the requirements of public into consideration ... and make proposals to members of the government as much as we can.*” He said he was confident the new government would “*take serious action*” if the proposals were sound. “*Having seen improvements in just a short period of time, we are expecting more progress in the long run as well.*”⁹

SHAN PARTY: TIME FOR ALL TO SMOKE PEACE PIPE

The Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), the third largest winning party in the November 2010 elections, submitted a petition to the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) speaker on 31 July calling for peace talks and cessation of human rights abuses, according to the party leadership. SNDP Central Executive Committee member and MP-elect for Laikha Township, Shan State Sai Tin said that fighting between the government and ethnic groups had been going on for more than 60 years with no sign of either side giving up. “*It’s high time we all sat at the negotiating table for sensible consultation.*” The petition also contains a list of human rights abuses allegedly committed by the Burmese Army during its 4 month campaign against the Shan State Army (SSA). Copies of the petition have also been forwarded to the President, two Vice-Presidents, Union ministries concerned and to the Chief Ministers of States, according to Sai Tin.¹⁰

KACHIN STATE MPs TO INTRODUCE PEACE MOTIONS IN PARLIAMENT

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) MPs will put forward suggestions to achieve peace in Kachin State during the second regular session of Union Parliament which convenes again on 22 August. Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State (UDPKS) MP Daw Dwe Bu said that she would discuss the issue in the Kachin State parliament. UDPKS is a Kachin Party that is reportedly backed by the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). During the past week, MPs from UDPKS went to Kachin churches where war refugees were sheltered to hear their views on the raging war in the region. Dwe Bu said most of the refugees wanted peace and she would voice their views in Parliament. “*Without peace, it is difficult for any development to occur,*” she said. She noted that the recent cease-fire negotiations between the government and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) are largely focused on a temporary peace, but she wanted to put forward suggestions for establishing permanent peace. Similarly, Lower House Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) MP Kyaw Soe Lay of Mohnyin Township said members of the USDP also planned to introduce ideas for peace-making in Kachin State. At present there are 18 Lower House MPs and 12 Upper House MPs represented in the Kachin legislative assemblies. So far, the

⁹ USDP politician urges government action on commodity prices – <http://www.mmtimes.com/2011/news/585/news58505.html> (Myanmar Times) 31 July 2011

¹⁰ Shan party: Time for all to smoke peace pipe – http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3913:shan-party-time-for-all-to-smoke-peace-pipe&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 4 August 2011

government has held to its position that it only wants to talk peace with the Kachin at this time, and other negotiations with armed ethnic groups would have to take place separately. Peacemaking efforts are met with scepticism by some. One Kachin resident, observing the various statements by government officials, said *“The officials of the Kachin State government do not have the authority to speak about the war. Nothing will happen, even though they put forward suggestions for peacemaking in Parliament.”*¹¹

BURMESE MPs TO ATTEND ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

An observer Burmese delegation is to be invited to attend the upcoming ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly to be hosted in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 18-24 September. In a statement made by Dr. Aye Maung, Chairman of the Amyotha Hluttaw Government’s Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee, the parliamentary delegation will be headed by Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint and include MPs from various ethnic opposition parties. He also added that a decision on Burma’s application for full membership of the AIPA is also expected to be taken at the session. The AIPA, a wing of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), advocates for closer cooperation among the region’s legislatures and parliaments as they are *“the representatives of the peoples of ASEAN”* and thus ensure *“greater participation by the peoples of the ASEAN countries”* in the progress of Southeast Asia. If accepted, as is likely, Burma will join Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Brunei is the only ASEAN member state not to be part of the parliamentary grouping.¹²

ANALYSIS

As Burma prepares to convene its parliamentary assemblies later this month, elected MPs from both the USDP and opposition parties are engaged in the process of drafting proposals to address a wide range of issues. Prominent amongst the proposals is the issue of ending the on-going conflicts between government forces and ethnic armed groups, as well as matters related to economic and social issues. With a ceasefire still elusive, the initiative to submit proposals for discussion within parliament on the issue is a positive sign. However, given the constitutional weakness of the legislators’ mandate vis-a-vis security matters, not much hope can be attached to their efforts. At the same time, the call by the National Unity Party (NUP) leadership for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to participate in the on-going political process is interesting. Furthermore, the recent decision by the authorities to invite Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to attend a workshop on poverty alleviation, if true, would be a positive development. However, peace and development cannot be built on mere words nor can it be achieved overnight. Therefore, it will be a challenge for the Indonesian Foreign Minister to decide in the near future, whether or not Burma has made ‘enough’ democratic progress to chair ASEAN in 2014.

¹¹ Kachin state MP’s to introduce peace motions in parliament – <http://mizzima.com/special/kachin-battle-report/5723-kachin-state-mps-to-introduce-peace-motions-in-parliament.html> (Mizzima) 4 August 2011

¹² Myanmar MPs to attend ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary assembly – <http://www.mizzimaburmese.com/news/regional/8087-2011-08-05-07-51-03.html> (Mizzima) 5 August 2011