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OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN & DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI VOW TO COOPERATE FOR NATIONAL INTEREST

At the sidelines the National Workshop on Reforms for National Economic Development held in Nay Pyi Taw, President U Thein Sein received Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Presidential compound in the afternoon on 20 August. While the details of the meeting were not made public, the discussions were said to have been conducted in an open and frank manner. During the meeting the President explained to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi the measures taken by the government for national interests. Setting aside their different views, both the President and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi tried to find potential common ground to cooperate in the interests of the nation and the people.¹

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED AFTER DISCUSSION BETWEEN UNION MINISTER U AUNG KYI AND DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Union Minister for Labour and for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Aung Kyi and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi held a discussion from 1:00 - 1:50 pm at Seinle Kantha State House in Yangon on 12 August. The following press release was issued after the meeting:²

- (1) The two sides will cooperate in pursuing stability of the State and national development to fulfil the actual needs and desire of the entire people.
- (2) Positive cooperation will be made for further burgeoning of democracy in Myanmar and for ensuring economic and social development.
- (3) The two sides will avoid conflicted views and will cooperate on reciprocal basis.
- (4) The two sides will continue discussions.

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SUU KYI, GOVERNMENT COMMIT TO TALKS

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Union Government minister U Aung Kyi last week reached an agreement committing both sides to “positive cooperation” in the interests of political, economic and social development. Under the four-point deal, they also agreed to “cooperate in pursuing stability of the state and national development to fulfil the actual needs of the entire people” and “avoid conflicted views”. The 50-minute meeting on 12 August was the second between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Aung Kyi, the Minister for Labour and Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, since the formation of the new government in late March. However, the pair also met 9 times following U Aung Kyi’s appointment as the former State Peace and Development Council government’s liaison minister in October 2007.

Following the 12 August meeting, which took place at Seinle Kantha State House in Yangon, U Aung Kyi read out a joint press release outlining the agreement. “Cooperation is the main problem which we need to deal with in our country. We are now dealing with it,” U Aung Kyi said. “When that

¹ President U Thein Sein, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi vow to cooperate for national interest – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-20.pdf> (NLM) 20 August 2011 (p. 9)

² Press Release out after discussion between Union Minister and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 August 2011 (p. 16)

problem has been solved, the remaining issues would be corollaries of the main problem. “Everyone may face difference in everyone’s work. The situation is that we will prioritise cooperation.” Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said cooperation could bring “progress in any sectors”. “I hope there would be progress in all sectors ... if all things which are good for the country are carried out.”

U Thu Wai, chairman of Democratic Party (Myanmar), said last week’s discussions had produced stronger results than the previous meeting, which was held on July 25. He said the meeting had “raised expectations” of a breakthrough between the government and opposition. “Their joint press release from this meeting is a positive step and we believe if they follow the points in the announcement the country will benefit in terms of development,” he said.³

GOVERNMENT CONFIDENT OF PEACEFUL RESOLUTION IN KACHIN STATE

The new government is confident it can build long-lasting peace in conflict-ravaged Kachin State, the head of the recently formed Spokespersons and Information Team has said. Minister for Information U Kyaw Hsan, who leads the 11-member information team, told journalists at a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 August that the government had made a ceasefire offer but was still waiting for a response from the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO).

A previous ceasefire agreed in 1994 broke down earlier this year as a result of tension over the government’s Border Guard Force (BGF) plan and hydropower projects in Kachin State, with sporadic fighting between the Tatmadaw and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) taking place since April.

U Kyaw Hsan told reporters the two sides had exchanged letters and met three times for face-to-face negotiations. “The government has been showing much tolerance in striving utmost to restore peace in Kachin State through a ceasefire. Likewise, we all firmly believe the ceasefire and peace would be made with the KIO/KIA,” he said. “All in all, we will have to say that peace-building endeavours in Kachin State have not yet achieved 100 percent success.” He said that the Union Government was in favour of peace and only wanted to ensure the security of the people, army and state-run projects. “We do not accept any situations that can break up stability, peace and national unity ... we are showing great patience in that case,” he said. “We will continue to handle such cases with great care.” He said U Thein Zaw, a former Minister for Posts and Telecommunications and now Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Myitkyina, was leading a government negotiation team established on 27 June.⁴

NLD AND GOVERNMENT COOPERATION REMAINS IRRELEVANT FOR ETHNIC GROUPS

Although the new Burmese government and the National League for Democracy (NLD) have shown signs of being willing to cooperate, so far there is no hope that the result will be peace in the country or resolution of ethnic issues, said representatives of the New Mon State Party (NMSP). The NMSP General-Secretary Nai Hong Sar said, “Even if they cooperate on a reciprocal basis, there is no hope. I don’t believe their current cooperation will lead to internal peace, or will be able to guarantee the rights of ethnic people”.

Burmese democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and USDP Minister for Labour, Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Aung Kyi met a second time on 12 August following their first meeting on 25 July. A statement was released following their latest discussion. The NLD party welcomed the results of the meeting between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Aung Kyi. Following their meeting, Minister U Aung Kyi spoke of four points discussed with Suu Kyi. “Positive cooperation will be made for the further burgeoning democracy in Myanmar, and for ensuring economic and social

³ Suu Kyi, govt commit to talks - <http://www.mmtimes.com/2011/news/588/news58802.html> (Myanmar Times) 15-21 August 2011

⁴ Government confident of peaceful resolution in Kachin state – <http://www.mmtimes.com/2011/news/588/news58805.html> (Myanmar Times) 15-21 August 2011

development,” the minister said. The recent meeting between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the Union Minister included a discussion to reach mutual understanding between the government and NLD, just to agree that there will be cooperation between them, said the NLD source. U Nyan Win, a Central Committee Member of the NLD, said the NLD will have continuous discussions about ethnic issues if the NLD reaches success in reciprocity with the government. “If both sides find them to be beneficial, the discussions will continue. The NLD has cooperated, but there have been no benefits yet. It will take time to discuss a tripartite dialogue,” said U Nyan Win. Nai Hong Sar said that the current cooperation is only about social issues rather than political issues. Therefore, he does not believe this cooperation will lead to peace or achieve stability in the country, and he sees little prospect for national reconciliation as a result. He said that he thought that the meetings could be used as a ‘propaganda tool’ by Thein Sein’s government to show the international community that they have a softening stance towards the NLD, hence lessening international pressure.⁵

PRO-DEMOCRACY GROUPS URGE JAPANESE GOVT TO APPOINT SPECIAL ENVOY FOR BURMA

After a meeting with the Director-General of South East Asia and South Western Asia of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Burmese pro-democracy groups are now urging the Japanese government to provide support in promoting democracy in Burma including the appointment of a Special Envoy. According to one of the groups, discussions were focused on recent political developments taking place inside the country, the release of political prisoners, and the on-going fighting in Shan, Kachin and Kayin states. As a result, they called on the Japanese government to take a more active role in bringing about change in Burma, while at the same time contributing to the promotion of dialogue between the government and Daw Aung Suu Kyi. The groups also urged the Japanese government to make sure that on-going assistance programmes are supporting democratic changes in the country. With Burmese youth becoming more involved in social and political activities and circumstances allowing them to function more effectively, the need to enhance their knowledge in these fields will become more pertinent than before. The groups encouraged the Japanese government to encourage Burmese youth to pursue further studies in such fields as international relations, international law, human rights politics and social topics.⁶

ANOTHER MILITARY GENERAL GETS THE SACK

According to military sources in Burma, the Inspector and Auditor-General of the Armed Forces, Maj-Gen Kyaw Phyo, has been forced to retire following an investigation into allegations of corruption aimed at several high-ranking military officers. If confirmed, Kyaw Phyo becomes the fourth general to be sacked since February, following the removal of Lt-Gen “Thura” Myint Aung who was Adjutant-General, Brig-Gen Tun Than, the former commander of Rangoon Regional Military Command, and Maj-Gen Tin Ngwe, the former chief of the Bureau of Special Operations-5. Kyaw Phyo, formerly the Commander of the Triangle Regional Military Command, is believed to have been accused of smuggling cars via Burma's porous border with Thailand. Kyaw Phyo was promoted to the position of “Inspector and Auditor-General of the Armed Forces” in late August 2010 during a massive military reshuffle. He was previously commander-in-chief of the Triangle Regional Military Command based in Kengtung (Kyaingtong) in eastern Shan State, an area known for trade routes and smuggling syndicates. In late July, media reports suggested five generals were being investigated for corruption: Kyaw Phyo; Maj-Gen Myint Soe, the chief of Bureau of Special Operations (BSO-1; Maj-Gen Khin Zaw Oo, the Adjutant General and chair of the military-run Union of Myanmar Economic

⁵ NLD and government cooperation remains irrelevant for ethnic groups – <http://monnews.org/?p=3421> (Independent Mon News Agency) 18 August 2011

⁶ Calls to appoint Japanese Special Envoy for Myanmar – <http://burmese.dvb.no/archives/13943> (DVB) 9 August 2011

Holdings Ltd; Brig-Gen Thein Tun Oo, the commander of the Triangle RMC; and Brig-Gen Khin Maung Htay, the commander of the Coastal Regional Military Command. Meanwhile, rumours abound in Nay Pyi Taw that further forced retirements are on the cards. Some military families have voiced the opinion that the investigation is focussing on certain military officers because they had been outspoken in calling for better conditions for soldiers.⁷

MERGUI NLD CHAIRMAN JAILED

The chairman of the National League for Democracy in Mergui (Myeik) township, Taninthayi Region, has been sentenced to four months in jail for getting involved in a fight with two local youths. Chairman Soe Lwin and members of his family were involved in a fight with two youths on 26 July. It is alleged that the youths arrived at Soe Lwin's house and started kicking the gates. Both sides sustained minor injuries while Soe Lwin's wife, Khin Win, a bystander, was also hurt and hospitalised for two days. The NLD chairman reported the incident to the police and subsequently detained the two youths. On August 5, Mergui (Myeik) township court sentenced Soe Lwin to four months in jail and fined 1000 Kyats while his son and son-in-law were also given two months' jail-terms with a 2000 Kyat fine each. The court decided to let both of the assailants go with just a fine. Khin Win said she believed her husband had been jailed for being an NLD member and had recently being summoned by the authorities and pressured to denounce his party membership.⁸

ANALYSIS

The recent meeting between President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw coupled with the government's offering an olive branch to the ethnic armed groups has once again hit the headlines. While details of the discussion between the President and the opposition leader remain undisclosed, both sides have, however, welcomed the meeting positively. The government's proposal extended to ethnic armed groups for peace talks has been greeted in a much more negative manner. Many viewed the offer for peace talks at the regional level as the central government relegating the ethnic issues to a secondary status. Questions are being asked as to why the central government has delegated its authority to a lower level institution to conduct matters of national interest? Calls for engagement and dialogue have been the core denominators in achieving national reconciliation. Why then is it that the meeting between the President and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is being held at the federal level and meetings regarding the ethnic conflicts are being held at another? The government, on its part, is taking steps to bring about change to the country. However, most are unconvinced about the sincerity and goodwill of the central government. Releasing high-profile ethnic leaders from prison may help in this matter.

APPENDIXES – *Other important announcements and news*

Appendix A: UNION GOVERNMENT OFFERS OLIVE BRANCH TO NATIONAL RACE ARMED GROUPS⁹

Appendix B: UNION MINISTER RESHUFFLED¹⁰

Appendix C: UNION MINISTER APPOINTED CONCURRENTLY AS UNION MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY-1¹¹

Appendix D: SPOKESPERSONS AND INFORMATION TEAM FORMED¹²

⁷ Another Military General Gets the Sack -

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=21861 (Irrawaddy) 9 August 2011

⁸ Mergui NLD chairman jailed -

<http://www.dvb.no/news/mergui-nld-chairman-jailed/16967> (DVB) 10 August 2011

⁹ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-19.pdf> (NLM) 19 August 2011 (p. 1)

¹⁰ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-11.pdf> (NLM) 11 August 2011 (p. 1)

¹¹ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-11.pdf> (NLM) 11 August 2011 (p. 1)

- Appendix E: OPEN LETTER SIGNED BY 23 MPs AND NATIONAL RACES REPRESENTATIVES:
*“Every one who really wants peace to work with goodwill efforts in view of the interest of the entire Union and to stay away from acts that may break up the Union”*¹³
- Appendix F: REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR IS IN THE DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS / BUILD MUTUAL TRUST WHILE PRESERVING AND KEEPING IN FORE FINE TRADITIONS:
Letter signed by Chairman U Lalma Yaw Han (representing Lisu ethnic race), Vice-Chairman U Deinya Aphon (representing Rawan ethnic race), Secretary U Labaung Songnu (representing La Chik ethnic race), and Members U Phaw Yum Bauknaw (representing Zaiwa ethnic race), U Ingan Jarnaw (representing Jinghpaw ethnic race) and U Banli Hong Daung (representing Lawng Waw ethnic race) of Ethnic Kachin Races Traditional Culture Central Committee in Myitkyina, Kachin State to the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein¹⁴
- Appendix G: KACHIN ETHNIC GROUPS, SHAN ETHNIC GROUPS, BAMAR AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS HAVE BEEN LIVING IN KACHIN STATE IN AMITY THROUGH THICK AND THIN, AND ENJOYING STABILITY, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT:
Letter with the heading *“Request for restoring peace perpetually”* and signatures of 12 persons representing Shan ethnic groups to the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein¹⁵
- Appendix H: TO TRANSFORM FROM TEMPORARY TO PERPETUAL PEACE: COMMON CONSENT OF ALL BAMAR NATIONALS LIVING IN KACHIN STATE:
Letter with the heading *“Request for restoring peace perpetually”* and signatures of 16 townsenders of Myitkyina representing Bamar nationals living in Kachin State to the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein¹⁶
- Appendix I: AFTER TEMPORARILY MAKING PEACE IN 1994, REMARKABLE PROGRESS SEEN IN KACHIN STATE IN PARALLEL WITH OTHER STATE AND REGIONS:
Letter under the title of making eternal peace signed by the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Secretary of Myanmar Lesu Literature and Culture Central Committee in Myitkyina, Kachin State to the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein¹⁷
- Appendix J: KACHIN STATE GOVERNMENT MAKES GOOD HEADWAY IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER CONFLICTS BETWEEN UNION GOVERNMENT AND KIO:
Letter with the heading *“Requesting again for Peace of Kachin State”* with the signatures of the Chairman of Myitkyina Council of Churches in Myitkyina, Kachin State, Reverend U Ma Dein Zone Kyan and Secretary Bishop Canon Arbyaham Zaw Khaung to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein¹⁸

¹² <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-11.pdf> (NLM) 11 August 2011 (p. 1)

¹³ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 August 2011 (p. 10)

¹⁴ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 August 2011 (p. 16)

¹⁵ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-17.pdf> (NLM) 17 August 2011 (p. 16)

¹⁶ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 August 2011 (p. 16)

¹⁷ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-19.pdf> (NLM) 19 August 2011 (p. 16)

¹⁸ <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-08-20.pdf> (NLM) 20 August 2011 (p. 6)