
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 28

OFFICIAL MEDIA

THAI PRIME MINISTER VISITS BURMA

As part of her tour to neighbouring countries since taking office, Thailand's Prime Minister Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra paid an official visit to Burma on 5 October. During her goodwill visit, the Thai Prime Minister met Burma's President U Thein Sein as well as senior government officials and discussed the further promotion and strengthening of existing bilateral relations between the two countries. Matters relating to border affairs, border trade, and bilateral cooperation on the issue of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand were also discussed. President U Thein Sein informed the Thai Prime Minister on developments taking place in Burma and expressed his appreciation to Thailand for supporting Burma's bid to chair ASEAN in 2014. The President also discussed bilateral ties, the successful implementation of the India-Myanmar-Thailand highway project, cooperation of the two countries in the smooth implementation of the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) among Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, economic cooperation, narcotic drug eradication, and the promotion of trade and investment between the two countries. During the visit, the Thai PM also attended a signing ceremony for the construction of a road linking Dawna Hill (Thingannyinaung) to Kawkareik on the Thai-Burma border. While many western countries have endorsed sanctions on Burma, its immediate neighbours including China, India and Thailand have established formal relationships and close economic ties.¹

BURMA'S FOREIGN MINISTER ATTENDS 66th UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A Burmese delegation led by Foreign Affairs Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin recently attended the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) from 21 to 27 September. During his stay in New York, the Minister attended the UNGA Plenary and delivered a general statement on 27 September. He also participated in the High-level meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, the High-level meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security, the Annual Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the G-77 and the Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. The Minister also met Mr. Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General on 18 September and Madame Radhika Coomaraswamy, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict on 19 September. While in New York, the Minister also met with high-ranking officials from China, Norway, the United States, Slovenia, Cuba, Thailand, Germany, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan, Turkey, India, Bhutan, Pakistan and Belarus.²

¹ Goodwill visit of Thai Prime Minister further strengthen existing friendly relations between two countries / President U Thein Sein thanks Thailand for its support for Myanmar on proposal of taking responsibility of Alternate Chairman of ASEAN in 2014 -

<http://www.burma.library.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 October 2011 (p. 1 & 4)

² Union FM arrives back after attending 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 October 2011 (p. 7)

LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER THURA SHWE MANN RECEIVES JAPANESE PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann received a delegation led by member of House of Representatives of Japan Mr. Ryota Takeda of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) at the Hluttaw Building on 3 October. Discussions were held on fostering relations between the parliamentary assemblies in both countries as well as promoting trade relations between Burma and Japan. Those present included Deputy Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swa, Chairman of Resources and Natural Environment Conservation Committee U Lun Thi, Chairman of Economic and Trade Development Committee U Maung Maung Thein, Chairman of International Relations Committee U Hla Myint Oo, Chairman of Investment and Industrial Development Committee U Htay Myint and officials concerned.³

UPPER HOUSE SPEAKER U KHIN AUNG MYINT RECEIVES MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF JAPAN

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) Speaker U Khin Aung Myint received a delegation led by member of the House of Representatives of Japan Mr. Ryota Takeda (LDP) at the Amyotha Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 October. The two sides discussed matters of mutual interest and promotion of friendly relations between the two countries. Also present were the Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Mya Nyein as well as parliamentary committees chairs and elected MPs.⁴

GOVERNMENT HOLDS PEACE TALKS WITH ‘WA’ LEADERS

The first peace talks between government officials and “Wa” Special Region (2) group were held in Lashio, Northern Shan State on 1 October. At the meeting, the leader of “Wa” Special Region (2) peace negotiating team U Shauk Min Hlyan said that the “Wa” Special Region (2) is a part of the Union, that it would not secede from the Union, it will never commit the act of disintegrating the Union, and it will cooperate with the government for peace and stability and development of the border region in order to move ahead and ensure internal peace. The two sides discussed matters related to re-opening of education, health, liaison offices, the re-assignment of staff, drug elimination and regional development projects. The government’s negotiating team was led by former Minister U Aung Thaung (USDP) from Taungtha constituency and nine other members including the Regional Minister for Border and Security Affairs.⁵

³ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives member of House of Representatives of Japan and party - <http://www.burma.library.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 October 2011 (p. 16)

⁴ Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint receives member of the House of Representatives of Japan - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 October 2011 (p. 16)

⁵ Union level peace-making group, “Wa” Special Region (2) peace-making group hold peace talks for first time - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 October 2011 (p. 16)

HLUTTAW SESSIONS (29th to 33rd day) – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) session:

During the 29th to 33rd day sessions of the Pyithu Hluttaw the following key issues were discussed:

- **Proposal to “Amend Laws regarding Women”⁶**
 - The proposal to amend provisions in existing laws regarding women was submitted by MP Daw Mi Yin Chan from Kyaikmaraw Constituency (USDP) on 30 September was discussed and put on record.
- **Question regarding the action of the Burmese government for the delimitation of the maritime boundary between Burma and Bangladesh being heard at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and its progress⁷**
 - The proposal submitted by U Thein Swe of An Constituency (USDP) was discussed.
 - The Attorney-General stated that matter was brought to the attention of ITLOS by Bangladesh on 13-12-2009.
 - It is expected that ITLOS will make impartial judgment on the case in March of 2012.
- **Proposal on Rights of Peaceful Assembling and Peaceful Processing adopted and passed⁸**
 - Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko (USDP) submitted a proposal “to approve the Rights of Peaceful Assembling and Peaceful Processing Bill.
 - The bill was adopted.
- **Proposal to enact a law on water resources conservation for prevention against utilization of large amount of natural resources such as river water, creek water and underground water and water pollution**
 - U Soe Win of Sangyoung Constituency (National Democratic Force - NDF) submitted a proposal to enact a law on water resources and that the concerned Ministry should submit a related bill.⁹
 - The Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun (USDP) responded by saying that laws on long-term use of river water, creek water and underground water and prevention of water pollution are prescribed in environmental conservation law which has been drawn by the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry and submitted to the Attorney-General’s Office and thus when the law formally comes into effect, further steps can be taken for effective conservation works and asked the assembly’s opinion whether it is needed to enact a specific law.¹⁰

⁶ Second regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 29th day /Message of President approved and put on record - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 October 2011(p. 10)

⁷ Second regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 30th day/ Six questions raised and answered, one bill approved - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 October 2011 (p. 8-9)

⁸ Ibid. (p. 9-10)

⁹ Second regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 32nd day / Twelve questions raised, answered, one proposal discussed, one new proposal submitted – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 October 2011 (p. 9)

¹⁰ Second regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 33rd day / Twelve questions raised, answered, one proposal discussed - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 October 2011 (p. 10)

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) Session:

Similarly, at the Amyotha Hluttaw session the following questions were raised by the respective MPs in attendance:

- **Question raised on Chin State as a special zone for rural development and poverty alleviation and to implement special projects in the state as Chin State**¹¹
 - The Minister concerned responded by saying that it is required to present a report describing reasons to the Union government through the Chin State government.
- **Bill on Private School Registration**¹²
 - The Amyotha Hluttaw opposed the bill submitted by the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House). The Bill would allow private primary schools to be established by the respective Region/State authorities and provide ethnic students to study their native ethnic languages.
 - The bill will now be discussed in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) joint session at a date to be announced.

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT 'PEACE OFFERS' DESIGNED TO SPLIT KNU?

Burma's ruling party is sending its members to Karen non-ceasefire areas in the southern part of the country bearing peace offers. Most recently, MP Saw Ha Bee from the ruling Union Solidarity and Development (USDP) met local officials, religious leaders and community leaders in eastern Mergui to sell the government's peace deal. MP Saw Ha Bee, an ethnic Karen, declared that any Karen armed group in Tenasserim (Taninthayi) Region could contact the government for peace talks. However, despite the MP's outreach, clashes between government forces and Karen fighters have continued and remain tense. Karen National Union (KNU) officials said the government's 'peace offer' should be treated with caution. Saw Beller, chairman of the KNU in Mergui-Tavoy District, said that they only learned about the 'peace talks' through local village elders and that the government's aim was to persuade the KNU to enter peace talks. He added that the government would try to persuade the local KNU to abandon their arms and make peace with the government separately, or they will try to split the KNU into different self-interest groups.¹³

SSA-S ACCEPTS BURMESE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER TO START PEACE TALKS

A spokesman for the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) has said it has accepted the Burmese government's offer to engage in peace talks. SSA-S spokesman Major Sai Lao Hseng said the location and the time for the talks have not been set. "At first, they sounded us out," Major Sai Lao Hseng said. "We replied that if they officially offered to begin peace talks, we would be ready to meet with

¹¹ Second regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 29th day/Three questions answered, one out of three handed over to Public Complaint and Petition Committee, one old proposal approved, two bills passed, one bill submitted to Hluttaw -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 October 2011 (p. 10)

¹² Second regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 31st day/ Three questions answered; two bills, one proposal and one report submitted -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 October 2011 (p. 10) &

Second regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 32nd day / Three questions answered; two bills, one proposal and one report submitted -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 October 2011 (p. 11)

¹³ Government 'KNU peace offers' designed to split –

<http://karennews.org/2011/10/government-knu-peace-offers%E2%80%99-designed-to-split.html/> (Karen News) 2 October 2011.

them. We have said that we are willing to use peaceful ways to solve the problems.” While the SSA-S has accepted in principle to begin talks, its ally the SSA-N (Shan State Army- North) has said that it has not received an offer to engage in peace talks from the government.¹⁴

ANALYSIS

The Thai Prime Minister’s goodwill visit will consolidate bilateral relations between the two countries. The mega Dawei Project to be implemented by the Bangkok-based Italian-Thai Development conglomerate will likely have been raised, and the Thai PM’s visit will further support the legitimacy of the government in Nay Pyi Taw. The visit of Japanese parliamentarian and LDP member Mr Ryota Takeda was a fact-finding mission. Following the brutal crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988, Japan suspended its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the country. However, in 1998 and 2002, ODA assistance was resumed to fund development projects in Burma and the recent visits by Japanese MPs could be seen as a shift in restoring relations between the two countries. With the government making progress in promoting relations on the international front, its domestic worries still continue.

The government’s peace offer to the ethnic armed groups has yet to yield the intended results. However, news that the Shan State Army (South) is considering the government’s olive branch is a step towards the right direction. The ethnic issue has been one of the long-standing issues which have plagued the country since its independence. While political, economic and social changes to the country are vital to the development of the country, national reconciliation between the government and ethnic armed groups must be accorded with the same level of priority. Otherwise, the desired national development will not be achieved.

¹⁴ SSA-S accepts Burmese government’s offer to start peace talks – <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6029-ssa-s-accepts-burmese-governments-offer-to-start-peace-talks.html> (Mizzima) 6 October 2011

APPENDICES

Other important announcements and news

Appendix A:

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

Accepting of complaint¹⁵

1. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has been established to promote and protect the fundamental rights of citizens enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and it has opened its office at No. 27, Pyay Road, Hline Township, Yangon.
2. Any citizen may send complaint to the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission when his or her fundamental rights in the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar are violated. The following facts must be stated completely in the complaint:-
 - (a) Complainant's name, full address and contact address (If any phone, fax and e-mail),
 - (b) Full account of how the Complainant's rights were violated, and
 - (c) Signed admission that the facts stated in the complaint are true.
3. The complaint, attached with copy of the Complainant's national registration card, must be addressed to the Secretary of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and may be either sent by registered mail or delivered to the Commission in person.
4. The facts under above-mentioned paragraph 2(a), (b) and (c) are necessary to be mentioned completely so that the Commission will be able to deal with the complaint effectively.
5. Matters that have been brought before a court or under the proceedings of a court of law and Q matters that have been finally decided by a court are not relevant under this announcement.
6. In its examination of the complaints which are received, the Commission will, if and when necessary, interview the complainant.
7. If the Commission concludes that the alleged violations of the fundamental rights in the Constitution against a citizen are true, it will take steps in accordance with its rules of procedure to promote and safeguard the fundamental rights.

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

Date: 6 October 2011

¹⁵ The Republic of the Union of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission accepting of complaint - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 October 2011 (p. 7)