

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 32

OFFICIAL MEDIA

INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS BURMA, MEETS BURMESE LEADERS & MINISTERS

Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr R.M. Marty M. Natalegawa visited Burma with the aim of gauging the country's readiness for the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2014. On 28 October, the Indonesian Foreign Minister met President U Thein Sein and held discussions on further strengthening friendly ties between the two nations and mutual efforts for holding a successful 19th ASEAN Summit as well as matters of mutual interest.¹ The Indonesian Foreign Minister also held separate meetings with the Speaker of Upper House U Khin Aung Myint and Speaker of Lower House Thura U Shwe Mann. The meetings focused on further cementing relationships between the two countries and matters relating to setting up cooperation between the ASEAN countries.²

On 29 October, FM Natalegawa also met his counterpart U Wunna Maung Lwin and discussed bilateral relations between the two countries. Similarly, in his meeting with the Minister for Labour and Social, Relief and Resettlement U Aung Kyi, the two sides exchanged views on reforms undertaken by the Burmese government, including the enactment of a labor rights law, measures for labor rights, poverty alleviation initiatives and conditions of cooperation in international and local organizations. The Indonesian Minister also called on the Minister for National Planning and Economic Development and for Livestock and Fisheries U Tin Naing Thein and exchanged views on the promotion of bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the ASEAN region.³

UN's NAMBIAR ARRIVES IN BURMA ON OFFICIAL VISIT

The UNSG's (United Nations Secretary-General) Special Adviser for Burma and UN Under-Secretary-General Vijay Nambiar met Burmese Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo in Nay Pyi Taw on 1 November to discuss cooperation between Burma and the United Nations.⁴ The UN envoy also called on Union Hluttaw Speaker (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) U Khin Aung Myint and discussed on-going developments of Burma, legislative tasks of the parliament, the process of strengthening national unity talks for internal peace and release of prisoners, as well as the promotion of cooperation of between Burma and the UN as well as ASEAN countries on international issues.⁵

On 31 October, Foreign Affairs Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin also received Nambiar and discussed changes and developments taking place in the country and as well as cooperation between the UN and Burma. Also during the visit, the UN delegation met the Union Minister for Labour and for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Aung Kyi.⁶

¹ President U Thein Sein receives Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Indonesia - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-30.pdf> (NLM) 30 October 2011 (p. 1)

² Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint meets Indonesian FM - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-30.pdf> (NLM) 30 October 2011 (p. 8) / Pyithu Hluttaw speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets Indonesian guests led by Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-30.pdf> (NLM) 30 October 2011 (p. 2)

³ Indonesian guests led by Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister visits Nay Pyi Taw - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-10-30.pdf> (NLM) 30 October 2011 (p. 9)

⁴ Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo receives Special Adviser to UNSG and Under-Secretary-General and party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 November 2011 (p. 1)

⁵ Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint receives Special Adviser to UNSG and Under-Secretary-General and party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 November 2011 (p. 2)

⁶ Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin and U Aung Kyi receive Special Adviser to UNSG - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 November 2011 (p. 9)

LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER RECEIVES NORWEGIAN MINISTER

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann received the Norwegian Minister of the Environment and International Development Erik Solheim at the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw on 1 November. They exchanged views on environmental conservation in Burma and measures being taken by the Hluttaw to meet expectations of the people and cooperation with international organizations in international affairs. Also present were Vice-Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa and chairman and secretaries of the committees for Hluttaw affairs.⁷

HLUTTAW SESSIONS (43rd to 44th day) – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) session:

During the Pyithu Hluttaw session the following key issues were discussed:

- A question on ensuring peace and stability in Kachin, Kayin and Shan States was raised by U Saw Thein Aung of Hlaingbwe Constituency (PSDP).

The Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Thein Htay replied that he alone could not solve the issue, as well as that:

- The Union Government issued Announcement No. 1/2011 on 18-8-2011 to offer peace for all national race armed groups that have not transformed their stances in accord with the constitution.
- The Union Government is striving for reconciliation with national race armed groups namely Kachin, “Wa”, Shan, Kayin and Mon groups.
- As a first step, State level peace talks were held and they adopted preliminary peace agreements on both sides.
- During the talks, they held discussions that the national race armed groups not to secede from the Union.
- Peace can only be achieved when there is mutual trust.
- Regional stability and development can be carried out only when there is peace and stability. If the region cannot restore peace and prevalence of law and order, the development tasks of the government will end in ruin.⁸

- **Union Hluttaw Bill challenged by Lower House**

Secretary of Hluttaw Rights Committee of Pyithu Hluttaw U Soe Yi, submitted the proposal “to appeal against and overturn decision of sending bills approved or deemed to be approved by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union to vet whether the bill is accorded with the Constitution if doubted before sending it to the President to sign prior to being promulgated as a law made at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 28 October 2011 as the decision is not accorded with the Constitution and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law and Rules.”

- U Soe Yi said that, in line with Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law Chapter (6) Sections (42), (44) and (45), the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has the legislative power and the Hluttaw Speaker shall send bills to the President in accord with Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Rules (106).
- Furthermore the duties of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union are also mentioned in Section (322) of the Constitution.

⁷ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Norwegian Minister - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 November 2011 (p. 6)

⁸ 43rd day session of Pyithu Hluttaw continues/Three questions replied, representatives invited to discuss three bills - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 November 2011 (p. 1 & 8)

- The duties are also prescribed in Constitutional Tribunal of the Union Law Chapter (3) Section (12) and that the Tribunal has rights only to assess laws prescribed by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in accord with Tribunal Rule (3) Sub-Rule (b) and Rule (3) Sub-Rule (h).
- So, the decision of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker to send bills to Constitutional Tribunal of the Union for vetting is not accorded with Law and Rules of the Tribunal.
- The Hluttaw Rights Committee of Pyithu Hluttaw concluded that the decision should be objected and cancelled as it is not in accord with the Constitution or other Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law and Rules concerned.
- The bill submitted by Secretary of the Hluttaw Rights Committee was discussed and supported by U Ba Shein of Kyaukpyu constituency (RNDP), U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun constituency (NDF), Daw Dwe Bu of N’Jangyang constituency (UDPKS), U Thaug of Mawlaik Constituency (NUP), U Thein Swe of An constituency (USDP), U Aung Mya Thein of Nyaungdon Constituency (USDP) and Daw Nan Wah Nu of Kunhing Constituency (SNDP).
- The bill passed with no opposition.⁹

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) Session:

One of key issues discussed during the session included:

- **Proposal to allow establishment of mining development foundation**
 - U Tun Kyaw of Shan State Constituency No. 10 (TPNP), U Ye Myint of Bago Region Constituency No. 4 (USDP), U Khet Htein Nan of Kachin State Constituency No. 1 (UDPKS), U Hla Swe of Magway Region Constituency No. 12 (USDP), U Kyaw Kyaw of Rakhine State Constituency No. 2 (RNDP) and U Zon Hle Htan of Chin State Constituency No. 2(CPP) discussed matters related to the proposal.
 - They said that the proposal is in conformity with the programmes on rural development and poverty alleviation being undertaken by the State. If permission is received, the foundation can contribute towards the development of the people in its bit and help improve social economic life of the national races. The proposal was approved by the house.¹⁰

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

DKBA BATTALION SIGNS A CEASE-FIRE WITH BURMESE GOVERNMENT

A battalion of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the Burmese government agreed to a cease-fire on 3 November. Major General Saw La Bwe (aka Bo Moustache) said that the ceasefire agreement with the Burmese authorities would go into effect on 6 November and that the DKBA will re-open its headquarters in Some Seen Myaing, Myawaddy Township in Karen State. Under the agreement, the DKBA will have the right to collect taxes in areas under its control.

Recently, the government has been involved in trying to achieve cease-fires with several ethnic armed groups. It has reached cease-fire agreements with the United Wa State Army (Wa Region 2),

⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 44th day/One proposal submitted and nine questions answered - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 November 2011 (p. 16, 8 & 9)

¹⁰ Amyotha Hluttaw session continues for 43rd day/Discussion of one proposal continued, one bill approved - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 November 2011 (p. 16 & 9)

and the Mong La group (Special Region 4). The DKBA battalion is the third group to achieve a cease-fire in recent government talks.¹¹

ANALYSIS

The visit by the Special Representative of the United Nations' Secretary-General Vijay Nambiar gave the international community a good opportunity to assess the changes taking place inside Burma.

The visit by the Indonesian Foreign Minister Natalegawa was a fact-finding trip on Burma's readiness to chair ASEAN in 2014. While the decision on the chairmanship of the regional bloc remains undecided, early indications are that Burma may have done enough to please the visiting Indonesian FM to secure the bid.

The news that a peace accord has been reached between the government and the DKBA, an armed ethnic group, is yet again a boost for President U Thein Sein's government as it strives to promote peace and stability within the country. The agreement signed with Major General Saw La Bwe's (aka Bo Moustache) faction will be seen by the authorities in Nay Pyi Taw as an achievement and serve as a basis in bringing to an end fighting between the government and the armed ethnic groups. In the past, negotiations with armed groups have failed partly due to the government's demand imposed on ethnic armed groups to transform into the Border Guard Force (BGF). However, in the recent peace deal with the DKBA, it was stated that despite the cease-fire the DKBA will not be asked to join the BGF. While a small number of groups have accepted the government's goodwill, the majority of the armed ethnic groups remain undecided and to date have adopted a cautious approach towards the issue.

¹¹ DKBA battalion signs a cease-fire with Burmese government - <http://mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6151-dkba-battalion-signs-a-cease-fire-with-the-burmese-government.html>
(Mizzima) 4 November 2011