

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 35

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT OBAMA CONFIRMS VISIT OF US SECRETARY OF STATE CLINTON TO BURMA

US and ASEAN leaders addressed the 3rd ASEAN-US leaders meeting held in Bali, Indonesia on 18 November. The meeting was held under the programme of 19th ASEAN Summit and related meetings being held at the sidelines of the 19th ASEAN Summit in Indonesia. In his speech, US President Barack Obama revealed his recognition for democratic reforms of new government and Hluttaws of Burma and confirmed the trip of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Burma in the near future to enhance cooperation in Burma's positive developments and to open a new chapter of mutual relation. President U Thein Sein also welcomed the US President's positive remarks.¹ (*For President Obama's full speech, please see Appendix A*)

BURMA GIVEN ASEAN CHAIRMANSHIP

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have agreed to allow Burma to Chair the regional bloc in 2014, amidst signs of reforms being implemented by its new government. The decision was made during the Summit of the 10-member group in Bali, Indonesia. Along with the ASEAN chairmanship, the decision will provide Burma to host the East Asia Summit in 2014, which brings ASEAN members together with the United States, China and Russia, among others. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw issued a press release welcoming the news.² (*See Appendix B for the full press release.*)

BURMESE PRESIDENT ATTENDS 19TH ASEAN SUMMIT IN BALI

President U Thein Sein attended the opening ceremony of 19th ASEAN Summit and the Plenary Session held at the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Centre (BNDCC) in Bali, Indonesia on 17 November. Apart from the 19th ASEAN Summit, President U Thein Sein participated in the regular ASEAN Plus One Summits with China, India, Japan and South Korea and the 3rd ASEAN-US Leaders Meeting. He also attended the ASEAN+3 Summits involving the leaders from ASEAN and China, Japan and South Korea, the 6th East Asia Summit (EAS) and the 4th ASEAN-UN Summit. President U Thein also met US President Obama, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as well as leaders from China, South Korea and India.³

¹ US President Barack Obama reveals recognition for democratic reforms of new government and Hluttaws of Myanmar and confirms the trip of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Myanmar to enhance cooperation in Myanmar's positive developments at 3rd ASEAN-US leaders meeting -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-19.pdf> (NLM) 19 November 2011 (p. 16)

² ASEAN Foreign Ministers unanimously express their support to Myanmar to Take Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014 –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 November 2011 (p. 9)

³ President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein attends opening ceremony of 19th ASEAN Summit –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 November 2011 (p. 1) /

President U Thein Sein attends 19th ASEAN Summit plenary session -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 November 2011 (p. 16) /

President U Thein Sein meets UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 November 2011 (p. 2) /

President U Thein Sein attends 14th ASEAN-China Commemorative Summit, Launching of ASEAN-China Centre, 14th ASEAN-Japan Summit, 14th ASEAN-Republic of Korea Summit and 14th ASEAN+3 Summit -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 November 2011 (p. 1, 6 & 7) /

President U Thein Sein attends 4th ASEAN-UN Summit -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 November 2011 (p. 9) /

President U Thein Sein attends 3rd ASEAN-US Leaders Meeting -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 November 2011 (p. 16 & 11) /

PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN ATTENDS SIGNING CEREMONY ON BALI DECLARATION

President U Thein Sein attended the signing ceremony of the Bali Declaration on ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations in Bali, Indonesia on 17 November. Together with the President the ASEAN Heads of State/Government Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah of Brunei, Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen, Indonesian President Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Laotian Prime Minister Mr Thongsing Thammavong, Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Sri Md Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Philippines President Mr Benigno Aquino, Singaporean Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong, Thai Prime Minister Ms Yingluck Shinawatra and Vietnamese Prime Minister Mr Nguyen Tan Dung signed the Declaration. Other documents signed included an agreement on the establishment of an ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) and the Declaration on ASEAN Unity in Cultural Diversity: Towards Strengthening the ASEAN Community.⁴

HLUTTAW SESSIONS (49th to 50th Day) – Highlights

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw)

During the 4th day session of the Union Hluttaw, the following key issue was discussed.

- **Regarding the decisions taken by the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) on rejecting the bill approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw) the Speaker of the House U Khin Aung Myint (USDP - Mandalay Region Constituency No.8) made the following clarifications:**
 - The decision taken by the Pyithu Hluttaw on 2 November 2011 to cancel the bill of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw was neither in accordance with the constitution nor existing Rules and By-laws.
 - The Speaker attempted to find a solution to address the matter at hand, however due to the lack of provisions in existing parliamentary laws he could not do so.
 - He urged that members of the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw needed to show respect towards the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and its speaker. Furthermore, it is important for the majority to listen to wishes of the minority and vice versa and under these circumstances, he (the Speaker) is ready to accept the decision and **to revoke the 28 October decision taken at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session.**⁵

During the 5th day session of the Union Hluttaw, the following key issues were discussed.

- **One bill was approved and a report of the joint bill committee was sought for resolution and names were enlisted for discussion. Five representatives discussed the different views of Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw on the facts of the Peaceful Assembly and Procession Bill.**
 - Regarding the bill, U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun Constituency (NDF), Dr. Aye Maung of Rakhine State constituency No.1 (RNDP), U Mya Thein of Bogale Constituency (USDP), U

9th ASEAN-India Summit, 6th East Asia Summit Plenary Session, and 6th East Asia Summit Retreat Session held in Bali –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 November 2011 (p. 1 & 7) /

President U Thein Sein attends meeting between ASEAN leaders and ABAC -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 November 2011 (p. 8) /

President U Thein Sein attends Mekong-Japan Summit -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 November 2011 (p. 5)

⁴ President U Thein Sein attends ceremony to sign Bali Declaration on ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 November 2011 (p. 9)

⁵ Fourth day Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Session held/Bill amending Political Parties Registration Law approved by both Hluttaws put on record by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-19.pdf> (NLM) 19 November 2011 (p. 1, 8, 9 & 10)

Stephen of Kengtung Constituency (USDP) and U Aung Mya Than of Nyaungdon Constituency (USDP) submitted amendments and changes to the bill. The Chairperson U Mya Nyein of the Joint Bill Committee (USDP) explained the findings and resolution of the Joint Bill Committee with respect to the Peaceful Assembly and Procession Bill. Secretary of the Joint Bill Committee U T Kun Myat (USDP) and member of the Joint Bill Committee Daw Nan Wa Nu (SNDP) also made explanations.⁶

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) session:

During the session of the Pyithu Hluttaw the following key issue was discussed.

- **The Hluttaw representatives discussed and approved the paragraphs and sub-paragraphs of the amendments concerning the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Bill sent by the Amyotha Hluttaw with approval.**
 - U Win Oo of Yebyu Constituency (USDP), U Thaug Han of Yinmabin Constituency (USDP), U Htay Myint of Myeik Constituency (USDP), Dr Sai Kyaw Ohn of Namkham Constituency (SNDP), U Pyae Maung of Madaya Constituency (USDP), U Sai Thiha Kyaw of Mongyai Constituency (SNDP), U Htay Oo of Hinthada Constituency (USDP), U Tin Htut of Zalun Constituency (USDP), U Kyaw Khaing Win of Mei-sei Constituency (USDP), U Min Swe of Daik-U constituency (USDP), U Maung Toe of Minhla Constituency (USDP), U Win Than of Thabaung Constituency (USDP), U Tin Maung Oo of Shwepyitha Constituency (USDP), U Yaw Di Dway of Putao Constituency (USDP), U Aung Thant of Patheingyi Constituency (USDP) and U Thaug of Mawlaik Constituency (NUP) and U Aung Mya Than of Nyaungdon Constituency (USDP) discussed the proposed amendments of the bill.
 - As there was no objection to the proposal for the amendment of the Bill Committee, the proposal was approved. The Vacant, Fallow, Virgin Lands Management Bill will be further discussed at the 51st day session of the Pyithu Hluttaw.⁷

DEPUTY PYITHU HLUTTAW SPEAKER RECEIVES GERMAN DELGATION FROM HANNS SEIDEL FOUNDATION

Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa received the Resident Representative of Hanns Seidel Foundation of Germany Axel Neubert and party at the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw on 22 November. Those present included the Chairperson of Pyithu Hluttaw International Relations Committee U Hla Myint Oo, Chairperson of Bill Committee U T Kun Myat and Secretary Dr Soe Yin of Hluttaw Rights Committee and member of Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission U Than Tun. Discussions focused on promoting relations, including organizing for Hluttaw representatives study visits to Germany as well as to attend workshops organized by the Hanns Seidel Foundation.⁸

⁶ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continues for fifth day/One bill approved, report of Joint Bill Committee sought for resolution, names enlisted for discussion -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 November 2011 (p. 10 & 11)

⁷ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 50th day/Amendments to Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Bill discussed -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-24.pdf> (NLM) 24 November 2011 (p. 1 & 8)

⁸ Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives German guests – Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives German guests –

<http://www.burma.library.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 November 2011 (p. 11)

UNION MINISTER RECEIVES FRENCH AMBASSADOR & FRENCH HUMAN RIGHTS AMBASSADOR ZIMERAY

Union Minister for Border Affairs and for Myanmar Industrial Development Lt-Gen Thein Htay received French Ambassador to Myanmar Thierry Mathou and the visiting French Ambassador for Human Rights Francois Zimeray at the Minister's Office in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 November. During the meeting they exchanged views on political progress and human rights issues in Burma and discussed plans for cooperation for improvement of human rights.⁹ On the same day, the French delegation also met Attorney-General Dr Tun Shin.¹⁰

In addition to their official meetings, the two French ambassadors met as well 20 former political prisoners who had been recently released. During the meeting at the National League for Democracy (NLD) headquarters in Yangon on 22 November, Ambassador Zimeray said that he would urge government officials to provide training on human rights to officials from the judicial and prison departments.¹¹

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

NAY PYI TAW REP MEETS ETHNIC DELEGATIONS

U Aung Min, minister of railway transport and special representative of President Thein Sein, met delegations from Shan, Karen, Karenni, Chin and Kachin armed movements on 19 November at an undisclosed location on the Thai-Burmese border. Three of the groups had reportedly agreed to sign the ceasefire agreement with respective state governments:

- Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)
- Karen National Union (KNU)
- Chin National Front (CNF)

The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), meanwhile, agreed to hold further peace talks first before signing the ceasefire treaty. The only major ethnic armed group that failed to appear at what has been termed as "the good will meeting" was the New Mon State Party (NMSP). It had unsuccessfully insisted on U Aung Min meeting the negotiating committee formed by the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). (KNU, CNF, KNPP and KIO are also UNFC members). The meeting on the border closely followed ASEAN's approval of Burma assuming the grouping's chair in 2014 as well as Aung San Suu Kyi's decision to re-register her National League for Democracy (NLD) and contest the upcoming by elections. Heads of the said delegations were: Sao Yawdserk (RCSS), David Taw (KNU), Bee Htoo (KNPP), Zin Cung (CNF) and N Ban La (KIO).¹²

MON PARTIES FORM COALITION

Two major ethnic Mon political parties—the All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMDP) and the Mon National Democratic Front (MNDF)—have agreed to form a coalition in preparation for future elections in Mon State, according to party leaders. The AMDP, which officially supported the 2008

⁹ Union Minister receives French Ambassador, Human Rights Ambassador - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-24.pdf> (NLM) 24 November 2011 (p. 2)

¹⁰ Attorney-General of the Union meets French Ambassador for Human Rights, French Ambassador to Myanmar – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-24.pdf> (NLM) 24 November 2011 (p. 2)

¹¹ French Minister Met with Former Political Prisoners - <http://www.nldburma.org/international-affairs/europ/450-french-minster-met-with-former-political-prisoners-.html> (NLD) 22 November 2011

¹² Nay Pyi Taw reps' meets ethnic delegations - http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4219:naypyi-taw-rep-meets-ethnic-delegations&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 21 November 2011

Constitution, won 16 seats in Mon State at last year's general elections. The MNDF neither approved the Constitution nor took part in the elections. However, it won five seats—all in Mon State—in the 1990 elections. Nai Ngwe Thein, the Chairman of the AMDP, said, "We have informally agreed to form one party. Whatever happens in the future, we will only have one party in Mon State. There should not be two ethnic parties competing." Some political observers in Mawlamyine, the capital of Mon State, said that the Secretary of the AMDP, Min Ngwe Soe, who is currently the Minister of Finance and Revenue in the Mon State government, will not agree to join. They say he disapproves of former members of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) joining the MNDF. However, other Mon sources say people, in general, are encouraged by the merging of the two parties. The AMDP secretary said the party will hold a meeting to discuss the coalition with its members. Dr. Min Soe Lin, the secretary of MNDF, said, "We do not want our Mon people confused when they vote. That's why we should have only one party. Needless to say, we are going to be powerful if we can join two parties as one."¹³

KIA PUSHES BACK BURMESE ARMY TROOPS FROM LAIZA HEADQUARTERS

Kachin Independence Army (KIA) troops pushed back Burmese Army forces from the KIA's Laiza headquarters on 17 November, seizing many small arms as well as field artillery, according to frontline sources. Almost all government military columns operating in the N'tap Bum mountain range, about 8 miles southwest of Laiza headquarters in eastern Kachin State, were forced back, said KIA officers speaking from headquarters. Frontline KIA officers also claimed that Burmese soldiers fled from the strategic mountain range in disarray, discarding many of their weapons. About 1,000 Burmese troops had been positioned on the N'tap Bum since mid-October in order to capture the Laiza headquarters. Unsubstantiated reports claim that Kachin soldiers fell ill from smoke inhalation when artillery shells fired at their positions landed nearby. Government forces have made three attempts at seizing the strategic mountain range but have yet to succeed. Should they accomplish this objective, the fate of Laiza might hang in the balance, KIA officers noted.¹⁴

ANALYSIS

The decision taken by ASEAN to allow Burma to chair the regional bloc in 2014 and President Obama's decision to send Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Burma have been welcomed positively in Nay Pyi Taw. Although President Obama's speech welcomed the recent developments in the country and said that his decision to send US Secretary of State Clinton was in recognition of the changes taking place in Burma, he also cautioned that the new government in Nay Pyi Taw needed to do more to implement changes and that the US stands ready to assist.

President U Thein Sein's government since coming to power has embarked on a path to introduce changes and address these issues within the country, while at the same time taking seeking to garner support from both within the country and internationally. The decision by President Obama to enter a new era of US-Burma relations by sending the Secretary Clinton can be seen a just reward for his efforts and the Burmese President will now need to prove to his own people and the international community that he is indeed a man of his words.

Similarly, the decision by several ethnic armed groups to negotiate a cease-fire agreement with the government should be seen as a step in the right direction. However, in the past cease-fire agreements have been signed but have failed to end years of fighting between the government forces and ethnic armed groups. Whether this present process will end in a similar fashion or provide a new era of peace and stability remains to be seen.

¹³ Mon parties form coalition - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22538 (Irrawaddy) 25 November 2011

¹⁴ KIA pushes back Burmese army troops from Laiza headquarters – <http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2156-kia-pushes-back-burmese-army-troops-from-laiza-headquarters.html> (Kachin News) 23 November 2011

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release - November 18, 2011

Statement by President Obama on Burma¹⁵

Grand Hyatt - Bali, Indonesia

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Good afternoon, everybody. Throughout my administration -- and throughout this trip -- I've underscored America's commitment to the Asia Pacific region, but also I've underscored America's commitment to the future of human rights in the region. Today I'm announcing an important step forward in our efforts to move forward on both these fronts.

For decades, Americans have been deeply concerned about the denial of basic human rights for the Burmese people. The persecution of democratic reformers, the brutality shown towards ethnic minorities, and the concentration of power in the hands of a few military leaders has challenged our conscience, and isolated Burma from the United States and much of the world.

However, we have always had a profound respect for the people of Burma, and the promise of their country -- a country with a rich history, at the crossroads of East and West; a people with a quiet dignity and extraordinary potential. For many years, both the promise and the persecution of the Burmese people has been symbolized by Aung San Suu Kyi. As the daughter of Burma's founding father, and a fierce advocate for her fellow citizens, she's endured prison and house arrest, just as so many Burmese have endured repression.

Yet after years of darkness, we've seen flickers of progress in these last several weeks. President Thein Sein and the Burmese Parliament have taken important steps on the path toward reform. A dialogue between the government and Aung San Suu Kyi has begun. The government has released some political prisoners. Media restrictions have been relaxed. And legislation has been approved that could open the political environment. So, taken together, these are the most important steps toward reform in Burma that we've seen in years.

Of course, there's far more to be done. We remain concerned about Burma's closed political system, its treatment of minorities and holding of political prisoners, and its relationship with North Korea. But we want to seize what could be an historic opportunity for progress, and make it clear that if Burma continues to travel down the road of democratic reform, it can forge a new relationship with the United States of America.

Last night, I spoke to Aung San Suu Kyi, directly, and confirmed that she supports American engagement to move this process forward. So today, I've asked Secretary Hillary Clinton to go to Burma. She will be the first American Secretary of State to travel to the country in over half a century, and she will explore whether the United States can empower a positive transition in Burma and begin a new chapter between our countries.

That possibility will depend upon the Burmese government taking more concrete action. If Burma fails to move down the path of reform, it will continue to face sanctions and isolation. But if it seizes this moment, then reconciliation can prevail, and millions of people may get the chance to live with a greater measure of freedom, prosperity, and dignity. And that possibility is too important to ignore.

Later today I'll reinforce these messages in America's meeting with ASEAN -- including with President Thein Sein. Meanwhile, when she travels to Nay Pyi Taw and Rangoon, Hillary will have the chance to deliver that message to the government, to civil society, and to democratic activists like Aung San Suu Kyi.

Again, there's more that needs to be done to pursue the future that the Burmese people deserve -- a future of reconciliation and renewal. But today, we've decided to take this step to respond to the positive developments in Burma and to clearly demonstrate America's commitment to the future of an extraordinary country, a courageous people, and universal values.

Thank you very much.

¹⁵ Statement by President Obama on Burma -

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/18/statement-president-obama-burma> (The White House) 18
November 2011

Appendix B:

**ASEAN Foreign Ministers unanimously express their support to Myanmar to take
Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014¹⁶**

NAY PYI TAW, 20 Nov—A delegation led by President U Thein Sein went to Bali of the Republic of Indonesia to attend the 19th ASEAN Summit and related summits from 17 to 20 November. With regard to the trip, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release today.

The full text of the press release is as follows:-

PRESS RELEASE

The 19th ASEAN Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia on 17 November 2011, chaired by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and attended by the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, U Thein Sein and the Heads of State/Government of the ASEAN Member States has made the decision to accord Myanmar the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. The decision was made following the ASEAN leaders' consideration on the report of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Bali on 16 November 2011. At the meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin informed the meeting on the position of Myanmar to take the Chairmanship in 2014. The Chair of ASEAN and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Dr Marty Natalegawa also briefed the meeting on his recent visit to Myanmar. The rest of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers unanimously expressed their support to Myanmar. Myanmar expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the ASEAN Member States for their support, and the decision of the 19th ASEAN Summit. Myanmar will continue to work actively with ASEAN Member States in ASEAN Community building and for the achievement of the common goals of ASEAN.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
20 November 2011**

¹⁶ ASEAN Foreign Ministers unanimously express their support to Myanmar to Take Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014 – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 November 2011 (p. 9)