
POLITICAL MONITOR NO.1

OFFICIAL MEDIA

BURMESE PRESIDENT ARRIVES IN NEW DELHI TO ATTEND 20TH ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT

Burmese President Thein Sein arrived in New Delhi on 20 December to begin his two day official visit and to attend the 20th ASEAN-India Summit. The help under the theme of “ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace and Shared Prosperity” was attended by ASEAN leaders and Indian Prime Minister Dr Mammohan Singh.

In his address to the, the Burmese President reaffirmed its pledge in boosting ASEAN-India relations and close cooperation with other member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the important role played by India as an important dialogue partner and the crucial role it plays in regional peace and stability. Burma also expressed welcome of the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group (AIEPG) which it said will enhance cooperation and share peace, progress and prosperity. The President also stated that Burma valued the friendly ties been between ASEAN and India, while reaffirming its resolution in boosting cooperation between ASEAN countries and India.

On the sidelines of the summit, President Thein Sein called on Indian Prime Minister Dr Mammohan Singh on 21 December. During their meeting, the two leaders discussed bilateral cooperation in border region development and security issue, and the implementation of India-Burma-Thailand road to enhance transportation links within the region. Thein Sein also met with Indian businessmen and invited them to invest in energy and infrastructure projects in Burma including the Dawei, Thilawa and Kyaukpyu deep sea ports projects.

The purpose of the 20th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit is the commemoration of 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership and 10th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Summit Level Partnership Relations. ASEAN-India Summits were annually held starting from 2002 and 10th Summit has been held in Phnom Penh of Cambodia on 19 November. The relations between India and ASEAN regularly developed in 1991 in which India adopted its “Look East” policy. ASEAN-India Summit covers ministerial level discussions, people to people relations, coordination on business firm and cultural programmes.¹

PRESIDENT CALLS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ERADICATION OF CORRUPTION

President U Thein Sein delivered an address on reforms to improve the management and administrative capacity of the government at the Credentials Hall in Naypyitaw on 26 December. Present on the occasion were Union Ministers, Attorney-General of the Union, Auditor- General of the Union, Chairman of the Union Civil Services Board and members, Region/State Chief Ministers, deputy ministers, deputy attorney-general, deputy auditor-general, Chairmen of Self-Administered division/zones and departmental heads.

In his address, the President stated that since taking office his government had undertaken democratic reforms by establishing a new administrative system both at the Union and the

¹ President U Thein Sein leaves for Republic of India –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 December 2012 (p. 16)/

President U Thein Sein arrives in New Delhi to attend 20th ASEAN-India Summit –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-21.pdf> (NLM) 21 December 2012 (p. 1)/

President U Thein Sein attends 20th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 December 2012 (p. 1 & 9)/

Myanmar, India to boost economic, investment cooperation on mutually beneficial basis through people-to-people - connectivity –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-22.pdf> (NLM) 22 December 2012 (p. 9)/

Myanmar invites Indian investments –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 December 2012 (p. 16 & 8)

state/regional levels, by revising older laws that are not in line with reform processes, and by promulgating new laws. During the first stage of the reform process, the government had implemented major political reforms in accordance with the 2008 constitution but will need the cooperation of all stakeholders for the successful implementation of democratic and market-oriented economic reforms.

He pointed that in order for the government to implement reform plans effectively, it was necessary to have management capability and expertise. In addition, systemic reforms would not be very effective, if those who are implementing them are reluctant to give up their values and practices of the past and adopt new political, economic, social, and administrative values that are in line with democratic principles. Furthermore, he stressed the need for both the government and elected MPs to create conditions to foster good governance and an efficient government while at the same time all political, economic, social and administrative reforms being undertaken must aim at achieving grassroots-based development.

The President also stated that the elements of good governance and clean government are absent in many local administrative bodies and therefore it is crucial to implement reforms that are designed to improve the management and administrative performance of government agencies in the third stage of the overall national reform strategy. In doing so, the administrative reforms should be in line with the people-based development strategy which in turn would transform government officials into public servants who truly serve the public. In order for this to happen, officials from ward/village level to the union level must change their mindset, old behavior, and the way they used to performed in ways that will make the government more transparent, accountable, clean and effective.

President Thein Sein also urged for the creation of township administrative committees and sub-committees will be formed government officials government agencies, community leaders, and representatives from civil society, business and professional associations to manage law and order, security, the rule of law, and economic and social issues in the township and this committee will collectively discuss and make decisions on all the matters concerning the local public.

He also called for strengthening coordination between Union Ministries and state and regional governments, and also to define the division of power and responsibilities between the central and local governments more clearly by promulgating a new by-law.

In conclusion, he urged those present to work together with discipline and goodwill in order to improve the efficiency of the government and to foster good governance, to eradicate bribery and corruption by building a clean government in the country.²

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

SUU KYI EYES PRESIDENTIAL SEAT

Chairperson of National League for Democracy (NLD) party Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told the local people in Kyunsu Township on December 23 that she aims to become the President of Burma (Myanmar). The Noble laureate made a trip to Tanintharyi, southern region of the country on Dec 22 and 23 to meet the local people in Myeik, Kawthoung and Kyunsu townships, and Kanmaw village. "I would like to have 'political power'. Only when I am in a position of authority, I would be able to help the country and people," said Suu Kyi. She also said that although the country is rich in natural resources, people are still living in poverty. In her criticism to 'cronies', the 67-year-old said that only a handful of citizens are wealthy, and they should be shameful about that. Citing the complaint letters of the locals, Suu Kyi said many people across the country are demanding 'justice', and they

² President U Thein Sein calls for cutting "red tape" –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 December 2012 (p. 1, 8 & 9)

are encountering bullying behaviors of cronies and authorities due to the weakness in 'rule of law'. She also urged that public to speak out about their troubles. Suu Kyi pledged that she will report the problems of people to the authorities concerned.³

KIA UNDER HEAVY ATTACK NEAR HEADQUARTERS

Government fighter jets and helicopter gunships have launched heavy attacks against the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Lajayang region, about 11 kilometers from Laiza, where the KIA headquarters is located on the Sino-Burma border. KIA spokesman La Nan said the government army began its offensive and started shooting at bases around KIA headquarters on 28 December (Friday) and were still attacking on and off in the early afternoon. Casualties figures had not yet been reported. La Nan said he believed orders for the attack may have come from defense officials at the national government level, as lower ranking officials could not authorize the use of jet fighters in civil wars on their own. Speaking from a frontline base in Lajayang, Min Htay of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), a military ally of the KIA, said five jet fighters came from Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. John Sanlin, a Burmese war photographer, also said five jet fighters had been sent for the attack. The jet fighters shot at every KIA base in Lajayang in a bid to take over the region, which is strategically located. "Lajayang is a very important place," Min Htay said. "They [the government's army] want to take it over. If they get Lajayang, it means they also get Laiza. "We heard they [the government's army] hired professionals to come and shoot the KIA bases by jet fighters. But, we don't know who they hired." The heavy attacks on Friday came after Brig-Gen Tun Tun Naung, a northern commander of the government's army, ordered the KIA last Sunday to leave the route to Lajayang by Tuesday, saying government soldiers would be deployed there to work on administrative processes. The KIA refused to follow the order, which it described as a military threat and some Burma military watchers on the Sino-Burmese border, said the order was akin to a declaration of war.⁴

GOVERNMENT ARMY ORDERS KIA TO WITHDRAW THEIR TROOPS

The government army informed the KIA on 23 December to withdraw their troops from Myitkyina-Banmaw way by December 25, according to Peace-talk Creation Group (Kachin). "The Commander told me last night [December 23] to inform KIA to move back all its troops from Myitkyina-Banmaw way [in Kachin State] by 25 December," said La Mai Gyungyar, a member of Peace-talk Creation Group (Kachin) on 24 December. "So we have informed KIA today [December 24] about it. Concerning the matter, Saluk Khan, the leader of KIO peace panel responded to Aung Min, the vice chairman of the government's peace panel today. He replied that the official letter from the commander was like an ultimatum. And KIO sent a reply letter back today to inform that it objected to it," he said. The ongoing armed conflict between the army and KIA started in June last year, when fighting broke out after a 17-year ceasefire agreement fell apart.

The first Union-level peace talks between the government and the ethnic armed force was held in the last week of November 2011, and the second one was held in the third week of January this year. The third and the fourth meetings were held from March 8 to 10, and on October 30 in Ruli, China. However, a ceasefire agreement was not reached. Eleven Media earlier reported that the number of internally displaced persons reached about 50,000 at the refugee camps in Kachin State

³ Suu Kyi eyes presidential seat – <http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/1860-suu-kyi-eyes-presidential-seat> (Eleven News Media) 24 December 2012

⁴ Update: KIA under heavy attack near headquarters – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/?slide=kia-hq-suffers-fierce-air-attack> (Irrawaddy) 28 December 2012/
Kachin fighting intensifies in upper Myanmar: sources – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/3643-kachin-fighting-intensifies-sources.html> (Myanmar Times) 24 December 2012

by end-2011 while international organizations estimated the number of civil war refugees at about 100,000.⁵

SHAN GROUPS FORM CLOSER RAPPORT AFTER RANGOON MEETING

Both armed and unarmed Shan groups from all over Burma who participated in the forum held in Rangoon from 26-28 November are developing closer relations following the forum held in Rangoon from 26-28 November. "The sense of harmony was further developed by the Shan New Year Festival in Kengtung (Kyaingtong) from 12-14 December", said a Kengtung elder. "It seems the more than 50 years of separation has brought us closer to each other." The Kengtung Shan New Year celebrations, presided over by the Burma Army's Triangle Region commander, were taken part by more than 100,000 people from all over Shan State.

The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), led by Hkun Htun Oo, the principal supporter of the Rangoon meeting, is reportedly planning an all Shan State conference in order to prepare for the nationwide political negotiations with Naypyitaw. One result was the meeting between Hseng Keow People's Militia Force, formerly the Third Brigade of the Shan State Army (SSA) and the SSA North in Wanhai, Kehsi township, on 26 December. The Hseng Keow delegation was led by Sao Loimao and Sao Gaifa, while the host delegation by Sao Hso Ten and Sao Pang Fa, according to sources close to the Wanhai leadership. The two sides had been on cool relationship with each other, after the former had decided to accept a PMF status under the Burma Army in 2009. "The meeting in Rangoon had brought them back," commented a source who knows both sides. Although details of the 26 December meeting were not disclosed, it was likely they were discussing the upcoming conference in April, he added.

The SSA North's sister organization, SSA South, meanwhile, has been resuming better relations with the United Wa State Army (UWSA), a close ally of the SSA North. The two sides' relations were strained by the Wa suspicion that the SSA had been working in cooperation with foreign governments against its alleged drug activities and had led to a brief war in 2005. A UWSA delegation visited Loi Taileng, the SSA South's main base opposite Maehongson, during the Shan New Year. Its representative Sao Lao Mong reportedly promised his hosts there would be no more war between them.⁶

KNU ELECTS MILITARY CHIEF AS NEW CHAIRMAN

The Karen National Union (KNU) has elected military chief Gen Mutu Say Poe, who is believed to be a pragmatist keen on engagement with central government, as its new chairman to lead the group. Zipporah Sein, who had been general-secretary, was elected as vice-chairwoman. The decision was taken during the recent KNU 15th congress in the Lay Wah area of Hlaing Bwe Township, southern Karen State which began on 26 November. The new KNU chief Mutu Say Poe is replacing the outgoing Chairman Tamla Baw, who voluntarily stepped down on 26 November, while Zipporah Sein has taken over from David Takapaw. Karen sources in the Thai town of Mae Sot, Tak Province, by the Burmese border said that the negotiation process between the KNU and government will likely accelerate as Mutu Say Poe is a pragmatic leader keen to build move forward with cementing peace. Similarly, sources close to the government suggest that Naypyidaw officials will be relieved by the appointment as Mutu Say Poe is seen as someone President Thein Sein's reformist administration can work with. According to KNU sources, Mutu Say Poe enjoys support from the KNU's military wing, Karen National Liberation Army's Brigades 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7, while Zipporah Sein is supported by Brigades 2, 5 and the majority of the KNU's central committee. Other appointments see Hla Ngwe,

⁵ Govt army orders KIA to withdraw their troops – <http://elevenmyanmar.com/national/1868-the-government-army-informs-kia-to-retreat-all-its-troops> (Eleven News Media) 25 December 2012

⁶ Closer rapports among Shan groups after Rangoon meet – http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5168:closer-rapport-among-shan-groups-after-rangoon-meet&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 28 December 2012

who served as the KNU's joint-secretary 1, replaced by Thaw Thee Bwe and Kwe Htoo Win, formerly chairman of Mergui-Dawei District, Tenasserim (Tanintharyi) Division for the KNU, appointed as the KNU's new General-Secretary.⁷

KNU CONGRESS ENDS – ALL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS FILLED

The Karen National Union (KNU) 15th Congress finished with the election of all the organization's positions voted-in for the next four years administration.

Following the election of its five top leaders, together with its Central Standing Committee, the KNU elected General Saw Jonny, the former commander of the Karen National Liberation Army 7th Brigade, as its Army Chief. General Saw Baw Kyaw Heh, the former 5th Brigade Commander was elected as vice-chief-of staff (VCS) on 24 December.

The KNU has filled its eleven Central Executive Committee members with the addition of another six leaders to its top five positions. The six additional leaders are – General Saw Jonny, General Saw Baw Kyaw Heh, Padoh Roger Khin, Padoh Saw Thamein Tun, Padoh Mahn Nyein Maung and Padoh Ta Doh Moo.

The Karen National Union head of departments appointed to serve the next four-year-term are as follows:

- Padoh Mahn Ba Tun – Forestry Department
- Padoh Kawkasaw Saw Nay Soe – Transportation Department
- Padoh Saw Eh K'lu Shwe Oo – Health and Welfare Department
- Padoh Saw Hla Tun – Organizing and Information Department
- Padoh Saw Lah Say – Education and Cultural Department
- Padoh Saw Mya Maung – Breeding and Watery Department
- Padoh Saw Roger Khin – Defense Department
- Padoh Saw Kae Le – Mining Department
- Padoh Saw Eh K'lu Say – Justice Department
- Padoh Saw David Thakabaw – Alliance Affair Department
- Padoh Saw Aung Win Shwe – Foreign Affair Department
- Padoh Saw Ah Toe – Interior and Religion Department
- Padoh Saw Khay Hsur – Finance Department and
- Padoh Saw Dot Lay Mu – Agriculture department.⁸

GENERAL JONNY ELECTED AS HEAD OF KAREN ARMY

Brigadier General Saw Jonny, commander of the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade 7 has been elected as the commander-in-chief of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). The KNLA is the armed wing of the KNU. Brig-Gen Saw Baw Kyaw Heh the commander of the KNLA Brigade 5 has been elected as the vice-chief-of-staff (VCS), the second most powerful position in the Karen army. The two most powerful positions in the KNLA were elected by the newly formed KNU Standing Committee today at the organizations 15th Congress held at Lay Wah, Pa-an, Karen State. The positions of the newly two elected commanders will now be submitted to the KNU Congress for ratification.⁹

⁷ KNU elects military chief as new chairman –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/?slide=knu-elects-military-chief-as-new-chairman> (Irrawaddy) 21 December 2012

⁸ KNU Congress ends – all leadership positions filled –

<http://karennews.org/2012/12/knu-congress-ends-all-leadership-positions-filled.html/> (Karen News) 25 December 2012

⁹ General Jonny elected as head of Karen Army –

<http://karennews.org/2012/12/general-jonny-elected-as-head-of-karen-army.html/> (Karen News) 24 December 2012

BURMA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES ONLY, SAYS MILITARY CHIEF

A Burmese military chief says that the country plans to use nuclear technology for medical research and energy purposes, but has no intention of developing atomic weapons, according to state media. Vice Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing's statement comes a month after Naypyitaw announced it would declare any nuclear material following reports it was still harvesting military ties with North Korea. Speaking at a graduation ceremony for the military's medical academy in Rangoon on Saturday, Min Aung Hlaing reportedly said, "In modern medical treatment, nuclear medicine is effectively used to treat cancer with radioactive isotopes and radioactive therapy. "The military will not develop nuclear technology to produce weapons of mass destruction, but will conduct studies and experiments for peaceful purposes in accordance with international standards to use in the medical sector—in laboratory research for science and in the electrical energy sector." The Burmese government confirmed in November that it would sign an international agreement that would require it to declare all nuclear facilities and materials, and allow for UN inspections.¹⁰

ANALYSIS

Burma's political transition and process of reforms implemented by President Thein Sein in 2012 has seen the lifting of print media censorship, freedom of assembly and formation of trade unions as well as some significant economic reforms. The democratic reforms have been welcomed by Western governments and international institutions, and sanctions on Burma have either been lifted or limited. High-level visits have included US President Obama. The decision taken by regional organization of Southeast Asian states, ASEAN, to assume the groups' presidency in 2014, was another sign of normalization of ties and recognition the country's international standing. However, Burma's road to democracy has not been all smooth and trouble-free. In May 2012, communal violence between ethnic Rakhines and Muslim Rohingyas erupted in Rakhine (Arakan) State, near the country's border with Bangladesh. In September, thousands of villagers protested against the expansion of the Lapandantaung Copper Mine in Monywa. The demonstration was the latest example of long-oppressed Burmese citizens testing the limits of their new freedoms after years of authoritarian rule that saw protests routinely stamped out. At such a critical juncture in time, the unprecedented aerial attacks on ethnic Kachin Independence Army (KIA) by government troops have raised questions regarding the sincerity and uncertainty of the government's reform agenda. However many fear that the present fighting could escalate into a full-scale civil war and set back the on-going reform process. The Kachin issue together with other unresolved problems occurring in the ethnic minority areas is crucial in achieving national reconciliation. If there is to be lasting peace in the country, the need to seek a political solution will be of the utmost importance in addressing the question of ethnic groups and achieving peace. President Thein Sein's government is now entering a critical juncture in transforming the country and will need to realize that the success of the reforms lie not only with pushing ahead with democratic changes but also in fulfilling the wishes of the people including the ethnic nationalities.

¹⁰ Burma's nuclear program for medical purposes only, says military chief – <http://mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/8616-burmas-nuclear-program-for-medical-purposes-only-says-military-chief.html> (Mizzima) 24 December 2012