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OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN MEETS LEADER OF SHAN STATE ARMY (SOUTH) YWET SIT

President Thein Sein held peace talks with Lt-Gen Yawd Serk, Chairman of the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army in Nay Pyi Taw on 3 June. At the talks the President called on the Shan leader to remain committed to the union and stated that all the citizens wanted to see the end of over-six-decade-long armed conflict between national brethren, stressed that the sole solution is to negotiate. He also added that the government wanted to seek a new political path that will ensure political tolerance and dialogue while also ignoring the past differences. Thein Sein also said that upon prevalence of peace in all regions, the government and all ethnic armed groups will meet in Nay Pyi Taw or at an appropriate place to sign a total ceasefire deal.

The RCSS leader assured President Thein Sein that his group would not secede from the Union but just to obtain self-determination of right to build a genuine Union. He also called for dispelling of mutual suspicion and building of mutual trust in achieving peace. General Yawd Serk also held a separate meeting with the Union Peace-making Work Committee led by Vice-Chairman of Union Peace-making Work Committee Union Minister Aung Min and discussed the formation of peacekeeping monitoring groups, matters on running businesses such as agriculture and livestock breeding in line with the law so as to carry out rehabilitation tasks, opening of liaison offices, resettlement of LDPs, issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards and clarification on the current peace-making process.¹

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM CONCLUDES IN MYANMAR

World Economic Forum on East Asia 2013 held for three days including pre-forum seminars ended on 7 June. It is the first for Myanmar to host an international forum under the theme of “Sharing Prosperity” with the attendance of heads of State for East Asia, ministers, deputy ministers, personalities, company presidents and CEOs, experts in various fields and over 300 well-known media men from around the world. The final day of the forum focused on social security, encouraging development through strategic infrastructure, overcoming challenges with technological advancement, comprehensive and sustainable tourism development, effective investment, and cooperation with Myanmar. The country’s president also received the founder and chairperson of the WEF Klaus Schwab and Co-chairs on 7 June. During their meeting, Klaus Schwab and party promised to continue supporting the on-going reform process and assist Myanmar in her bid for development. They said the intention of holding WEF in Myanmar is not only for economy but for “socio-economic development of Myanmar people” and to enable the world countries know more about investment opportunities in Myanmar.

President Thein Sein thanked the group for their support saying that the country, though being an agro-based economy, is working toward to the end of an industrialized nation for development and prosperity by inviting foreign investment as the country is lacking capital, technologies and human resources. He hoped that the World Economic Forum would draw foreign investment and expressed his gratitude toward the WEF chairperson and co-chairpersons for fulfilling the requirements of Myanmar. The president also met business leaders attending the 3-day forum on 7 June and briefed them on Myanmar’s reform processes, investments in agriculture and tourism industry, human resources development, investment policy, foreign investment law and citizen investment law. During the forum the Burmese President held meetings with leaders from Vietnam, Laos and the

¹ Long and difficult period of efforts for national brethren to be finally sitting together at the negotiation table – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-11-red.pdf> (NLM) 11 June 2013 (p. 1 & 8)/ Union Peace-making Work Committee, RCSS meet – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-11-red.pdf> (NLM) 11 June 2013 (p. 1 & 8)

Philippines, Chair of UN Development Group and heads of global companies including Woodside Petroleum and Standard Chartered Bank.²

BURMESE DEFENCE CHIEF RECEIVES THAI NAVAL DELEGATION

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received a delegation led by Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Navy Admiral Surasak Rounroengrom in Yangon on 11 June. The two exchanged views on promoting of relations between Myanmar and Thai navies, holding talks between the two navies, doing exercises in natural disaster risks, preventive measures by exchanging mutual advice and security cooperation in the territorial waters of the two countries. The Thai delegation also called on the Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Vice-Admiral Thura Thet Swe and discussed matters of mutual interest and cooperation between the two countries.³

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

FIFTEEN MYANMAR ETHNIC PARTIES TO FORM UNIFIED PARTY

More than a dozen ethnic groups within a loose alliance agreed 11 June to establish a unified political party in a bid to secure greater representation for Myanmar's minorities in the national parliament ahead of 2015 elections, according to officials. The agreement by 15 of the groups to form the Federated Union Party (FUP) was made on the opening day of a two-day conference held in eastern Myanmar's Shan state capital of Taunggyi. Oo Hla Saw, General-Secretary of the Rakhine Nationality Development Party (RNDP) said, that the FUP hopes to "get on the same political level as the [military-backed] Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and [Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition] National League for Democracy (NLD)," together which hold the majority of seats in parliament. He said the FUP would be chaired by a separate group of ethnic leaders and that a number of NBF members would resign from their alliance to join the new party. The FUP is also expected to set the agendas of each different ethnic party and set the groundwork for a conference including all of the groups ahead of the 2015 election. The FUP will consist of the 15 political groups from ethnic Shans, Chin, Rakhine, Mon, Kayan, Inn and Pa-O minorities.⁴

² World Economic Forum helps put Myanmar back on international stage – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-08-red.pdf> (NLM) 8 June 2013 (p. 16)/
WEF Founder pledges continued assistance for Myanmar's reform process – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-08-red.pdf> (NLM) 8 June 2013 (p. 9)/
It is the best time for foreign investors to make investments in Myanmar: President U Thein Sein – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-08-red.pdf> (NLM) 8 June 2013 (p.8)/
President U Thein Sein holds talks with LPDR Prime Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-07-red.pdf> (NLM) 7 June 2013 (p.16)/
President U Thein Sein receives Vietnamese PM – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-07-red.pdf> (NLM) 7 June 2013 (p.16)/
President U Thein Sein receives Philippine Counterpart – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-08-red.pdf> (NLM) 8 June 2013 (p.16)/
President U Thein Sein receives UNDP Administrator – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-07-red.pdf> (NLM) 7 June 2013 (p. 8)/
President U Thein Sein meets CEO and Managing Director of Woodside Ltd – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-06-red.pdf> (NLM) 6 June 2013 (p. 6)/
President U Thein Sein receives Hong Kong-based Standard Chartered Bank Executive Director – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-06-red.pdf> (NLM) 6 June 2013 (p. 6)

³ Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Admiral Surasak Rounroengrom and party – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-12-red.pdf> (NLM) 12 June 2013 (p. 1)/
Myanmar, Royal Thai Navy to cooperate – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-12-red.pdf> (NLM) 12 June 2013 (p. 16)

⁴ Fifteen Myanmar Ethnic Groups to Form Unified Party – <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/party-06112013190735.html> (RFA) 11 June 2013

SHAN POLITICAL PARTY, ARMED GROUP PUSH FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Leaders of the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army's (RCSS/SSA) Ywet Sit and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) party chairman Hkun Htun Oo met and discussed ways to collectively urge the central government to open a political dialogue with Burma's myriad ethnic armed groups during their first official meeting in Rangoon on 13 June.

In the meeting between the 2 leaders 3 main issues were discussed: a framework for political dialogues, alternative solutions for Shan migrants in Thailand, and the releasing of political prisoners, according to Maj. Lao Hseng, a spokesperson for the RCSS/SSA.

According to SNLD spokesperson Sai Lek, the two sides agreed that the current ceasefire signed by the SSA-S would remain tentative if the political causes that led to the conflict were not addressed and the ceasefire would not be sustainable without implementing a political dialogue since there will be no mutual trust," said Sai Lek. A dinner to honour the RCSS delegation was hosted on 13 June and attended by SNLD members, SNLD chairman Sai Ai Pao, chief advisor of SSPP/SSA Lt-Gen Hsohten and Harn Yawngwe from the Euro-Burma Office were also present.⁵

MORE FIGHTING BETWEEN KIO AND GOVERNMENT TROOPS IN SHAN STATE

Clashes between forces loyal to the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the army continued in northern Shan state, according to a KIO official based in the area. The latest clashes took place near Mongkoe, in an area controlled by the Kachin Independence Army's (KIA) Battalion 38, which is under the group's 4th Brigade. It is unclear if there were any casualties as a result of the fighting which according to the KIO official took place because of the aggressive actions of Burma military units. Fighting also took place in Shan state between Kachin forces and the Burmese army on 14 June (Friday). Similarly, on Monday June 10th fighting took place near Hpai Kawng village in the Pangsai (Kyukok) region. This fighting involved Section 5 of the KIO's local civilian militia force known as the Mungshawa Hpyen Hpung (MHH) and government forces from Infantry Battalion 125. Brief fighting also took place Saturday June 8, in Pangsai again between KIO civilian militia forces and an unknown unit from the Burmese army. Friday's clashes come less than two weeks after the KIO and the government's chief negotiators met in Myitkyina, the Kachin State capital and signed a 7-point agreement where both sides pledged to take steps to reduce tensions and establish a troop monitoring mechanism that would prevent clashes. Despite the signing and goodwill displayed at the recent talks, a formal ceasefire has yet to be agreed to.⁶

NGO CALLS FOR POLITICAL PRISONER PLEDGE TO BE PUT INTO ACTION

Thailand-based NGO Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma (AAPP) welcomed President Thein Sein's pledge to ensure that all political prisoners in the country are released, but called on him to "put his words into action." "AAPP said it acknowledged the President's "powerful" message and said that the move was necessary for change and for national reconciliation though hundreds of political prisoners still remain behind bars.

"President U Thein Sein must use his presidential authority to remove the conditions attached on the release of former political prisoners and widen the mandate of the Committee to Scrutinize Remaining Political Prisoners so that those currently facing formal charges for their peaceful demonstrations and political activity can have the charges against them dropped once and for all," said AAPP. In a statement issued on 7 June, also stated the need to ensure all official members of the

⁵ Shan political party, armed group push for political dialogue – <http://www.dvb.no/news/shan-political-party-armed-group-push-for-political-dialogue/28780> (DVB) 13 June 2013/
Shan leaders meet in Rangoon – http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5460:shan-leaders-meet-in-rangoon&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 14 June 2013

⁶ More fighting between KIO and army in Shan state – <http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2523-more-fighting-between-kio-and-army-in-shan-state.html> (KNG) 14 June 2013

Committee are of equal standing and are meaningfully included in the decision-making process in a transparent manner. AAPP also called on the President to retroactively revoke conditions imposed by Article 401 (1) for all former political prisoners released under this provision through the signing of a presidential order.⁷

88 GENERATION ACTIVISTS MEET MAIN BACKERS OF MYITSONE DAM

On a visit to China, Burmese activists from the 88 Generation Students Group have urged the main backers of the controversial Myitsone Dam to completely shut down the suspended project in north Burma. A four-member delegation from the 88 Generation group met officials from state-run China Power Investment Corporation (CPI), the primary investor of the hydropower dam in north Burma's Kachin State, during the visit. The CPI officials briefed the delegation on their efforts to ensure the \$3.6 billion project adhered to international business standards and caused the least possible environmental damages. 88 Generation leader Mya Aye said the project could have detrimental effects on the local population and that the plans to build the dam at the source of the Ayeyarwaddy River, could have historical and economic significance. Under the circumstances, he called for the total shutdown of the proposed dam project.⁸

ALP ALLEGES NON-COOPERATION OF ARAKAN GOVERNMENT

Arakan (Rakhine) Liberation Party (ALP), an influential Arakanese ceasefire armed group, has not been able to implement the clauses included in the five point agreement with the Arakan State government. The ALP leadership has alleged that the authorities have not cooperated even after one year of signing the accord. Under the agreement the two sides agreed on a cease-fire, opening of liaison offices, not to cross each others' areas holding weapons without prior information or negotiation, freedom of movement for movement for ALP members and to continue negotiations for building peace initiative and development activities in Arakan'. Khine Thukha, General-Secretary of ALP, said that the ALP has been successful in opening its liaison office in Kyauktaw but the opening in Paletwa, Chin State has yet to be materialized. In fact, many Chin political parties including Chin National Front have opposed the ALP's plan to open the liaison office in Paletwa and citing that Paletwa is not inside Arakan state.

Presently the ALP members have the freedom of movement inside the country without carrying arms but the State government has not permitted the ALP members to fully engage in various development activities of Arakan, as agreed. The restriction has thus prevented the ALP to work for the benefit of common people and it has become a major challenge for them in achieving their goals.⁹

ANALYSIS

The meeting between President Thein Sein and Shan State Army (SSA) chief Yawd Serk and the meeting between Shan leaders from the SNLD and SSA has given Burma's national reconciliation process a much needed boost. While the meeting between Thein Sein and Yawd Serk was more focussed on dispelling suspicion and building trust between the two sides, SNLD leader Hkun Tun Oo and Yawd Serk's meeting was more to promote matters of common interest to ethnic Shan nationals. The two unprecedented high-level meetings will contribute to the bringing of peace to Burma.

⁷ AAPP calls for political prisoner pledge to be put into action – <http://mizzima.com/news-91481/prisoner-watch/9497-aapp-calls-for-political-prisoner-pledge-to-be-put-into-action> (Mizzima) 7 June 2013

⁸ 88 Generation Activists meet main backers of Myitsone Dam – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/36941> (Irrawaddy) 10 June 2013

⁹ ALP alleges insolence from Arakan government – <http://www.narinjara.com/main/index.php/alp-alleges-insolence-from-arakan-government/> (Narinjara) 8 June 2013

The decision by 15 ethnic-based parties to form the Federated Union Party (FUP) has been welcomed by many as an important step in promoting not only ethnic unity but also party politics in Burma. The FUP was formed to rival the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the National League for Democracy (NLD). Such initiatives could play a key role in moving party politics in Burma away from being ethnic-based to policy-based.

The recent clashes between government troops and KIO forces reflects the reality that on-going peace talks with ethnic armed groups have yet to yield the desired results. Such clashes jeopardize the peace process and once again highlights the need to implement effective monitoring mechanisms. The government and KIO signed a 7-point agreement recently and judging from the latest skirmishes, it would seem that both sides have failed to live up to their commitments. It is clear that the mere signing of agreements alone will not bring an end to the fighting. Ceasefire monitoring and a political dialogue needs to be implemented immediately.