
POLITICAL MONITOR NO.26

OFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT AND “WA” SPECIAL REGION (2) SIGNS 5-POINT AGREEMENT

The Myanmar Government and the Wa Special Region 2 reached a 5-point agreement on 12 July (Friday) in Kengtung. According to the agreement, the two sides agreed to maintain the already-achieved mutual understanding, trust and tradition of peace and to continue to cooperate on achieving peace through constructive discussions. Both sides also agreed to cooperate in the development of the region and in the eradication of narcotic drugs. *(Please see Appendix A for full text of the 5-point agreement signed between the Government and “Wa” Special Region 2).*¹

SSPP/SSA URGED TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR ADVANCING TO POLITICAL DIALOGUE

A delegation led by Vice-Chairman of Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPWC) U Thein Zaw held talks with a peace group led by U Sao Khun Hsai, General Secretary of SSPP/SSA (Wamheng) of Shan State (North) at Shweli Hall of the North-East Command on 14 July. During the talks, Thein Zaw called on the SSPP/SSA to the already established peace and stability, trust, disciplinary procedures and friendship and to make necessary preparations for advancing to a political dialogue. Members of the UPWC elaborated on measures to be taken in order to ensure improvements in education and health care sectors of Wamheng region, reclamation of farmlands to create job opportunities and smooth and secure transport for regional development.²

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN PAYS OFFICIAL VISITS TO BRITAIN

At the invitation of British Prime Minister Mr. David Cameron, President Thein Sein arrived in London on 15 July to begin his official visit. During his trip, Thein Sein met British Prime Minister David Cameron, the Secretary of State for Defense, the Secretary of State of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Secretary of State for International Development and the former Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Speaker of the House of Commons. President Thein Sein and Mr Cameron frankly exchanged views on poverty alleviation, micro financing, agricultural sector development, British investments in energy, telecommunications, infrastructure projects as well as English language teaching and human rights. Thein Sein met officials from the UK-ASEAN Business Council and also attended a roundtable discussion entitled “Myanmar Complex Transformation: Prospects and Challenges” hosted by Chatham House in London.

In his address at Chatham House, Thein Sein said the two countries are entering a new era of close Anglo-Myanmar relations and the two countries will not only be able to work together for the benefit of both countries, but will be able to partner across a range of international challenges. He also said, “thousands of prisoners” already had been freed and a special committee, which includes former prisoners, was reviewing the remaining cases and gave assurances that by the end of this year there will be no prisoners of conscience in Myanmar. Thein Sein acknowledged Myanmar’s ethnic strife but said overcoming it would require time and patience and that his government would

¹ Union Peace-making Work Committee enters peace talks with “Wa” Special Region (2) Peace-making Group – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 July 2013 (p. 16)/ Agreement between Union Peace-Making Work Committee and “Wa” Special Region (2) at peace talks in Kengtung on 12 July 2013 – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 July 2013 (p. 16)

² SSPP/SSA (Wamheng) urged to make preparations for advancing to political dialogue – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2013 (p. 1)

show “zero tolerance” for ethnically driven violence in Myanmar, and he expressed hope that a cease-fire pact with the last of the major armed groups to be completed in the near future.³

THEIN SEIN ARRIVES IN PARIS

Arriving in Paris for his first state visit to France after Britain, President Thein Sein met his French counterpart Francois Hollande for talks to strengthen ties between the two countries. During their talks, the French leader urged the Myanmar President to continue the process of political transition and deepen economic reforms that began two years ago and called for the release of all prisoners of conscience without condition. Hollande also called on President Thein Sein to investigate the inter-communal violence and told his Myanmar counterpart that France is willing to provide aid to develop its health and education programs.⁴

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Session

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convened its 4th day session on 12 July. During the session, **7 MPs held discussions on the farmland report.**

- **U Mya Thein of Bogale Constituency** said that **the Land Grab Investigation Commission’s report findings are based on actual events on the ground; the Union government should take action on the commission’s suggestions and urged the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to approve the commission’s undertakings and suggestions to be in accord with Section 228 of the Constitution if necessary for the interests of the farmers who have suffered losses;**
- **Daw Khin San Hlaing of Pale Constituency** said that as an MP, **she needs to coordinate and deal with the current problems people are now facing and also needs to protect the interests of all citizens and the State at any time and any place if necessary. Furthermore, the respective administrative bodies should cooperate with each other and systematic action should be taken against farmland confiscations and other forms of land confiscations. She also stated that farmland**

³ President U Thein Sein starts official visits to Britain, France –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2013 (p. 1)/
President U Thein Sein arrives in London –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 July 2013 (p. 1)/
President U Thein Sein meets with British Prime Minister –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 July 2013 (p. 9)/
Myanmar thanks British support for withdrawal of EU’s sanctions, resumption of access to GSP and democratization process –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-17-red.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2013 (p. 9)/
President U Thein Sein holds talks with British businessmen, Secretary of State for Defence –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 July 2013 (p. 9)/
President U Thein Sein meets former British PM, Speaker of House of Common –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-18-op-red.pdf> (NLM) 18 July 2013 (p. 9)/
We cannot let ethnic or religious differences become an excuse to revert to authoritarianism –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-17-red.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2013 (p.1 /8 & 9)/
President U Thein Sein receives British entrepreneurs, Secretaries of State for Defence, Foreign Affairs, International Development –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-17-red.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2013 (p.6)

⁴ President U Thein Sein arrives in Paris –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-18-op-red.pdf> (NLM) 18 July 2013 (p.9)/
President U Thein Sein visits Versailles Palace, Louvre Museum in Paris –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-20-red.pdf> (NLM) 20 July 2013 (p. 1)/
President U Thein Sein concludes European tour –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-21-red.pdf> (NLM) 21 July 2013 (p.1)

owners should have liberties to do farming and grow crops under the protection of existing laws, orders and directives.⁵

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convened its 5th day session on 15 July. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved an amended proposal to parliament asking the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to set a time frame and urgently undertake the suggestions of the Land Grab Investigation Commission's report which have been submitted to the Hluttaw by the commission to prevent losses to the farmers in conformity with the provisions of the Sub-section (A) under the Section 228 of the Constitution.

- U Win Myint of Pathein constituency submitted the amended proposal urging the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to release the time table and undertake the suggestions of the report in conformity with Sub-section (A) of the Section 228 of the Constitution. 21 MPs also discussed the two reports submitted by the commission;
- U Thein Yi of Htantabin Constituency said that while some companies violated the legal rights, some felt sympathy for farmers and are negotiating with them in attempts to settle the land confiscation issues in an amicable manner. He also urged the authorities concerned to conduct investigations to settle the issues.⁶

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convened its 6th day session on 16 July. During the session, the Hluttaw discussed the President's messages on the Declaration of the State of Emergency with Ordinance (1/2013) that will be lifted on 20 July 2013 and the allocation of budget from the Special Funds to the Ministry of Border Affairs. Other issues discussed at the session included the following:

- Discussions on the commission's report on land grabbing were made by Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Wai Lwin, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint, Deputy Minister at President Office U Thant Shin, Deputy Minister for Construction U Soe Tint and member of Nay Pyi Taw Council U Kan Chun. More significantly, the 5 government officials all stated that the relevant ministries concerned would return unused lands, except that on which implementation of projects are in progress and buildings or designated areas have been set up, to its original owners when a scrutiny process and thorough coordination process is implemented in accord with rules and regulations of the Farmland Law;
- The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the proposal urging the Union government to take quick measures regarding the suggestions of the commission's report in accord with the provision stated in Section 228 (a) of the Constitution.⁷

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

UNFC WANTS SUU KYI AT PEACE TALKS WITH GOVT

Mahn Mahn, the head of the United Nationalities Federal Council's (UNFC) technical team, proposed that Aung San Suu Kyi participate in their next talks with the government. The proposal was made at a meeting with a technical team from the Union Peace Making Working Committee in Chiang Mai on 13 July. Mahn Mahn also suggested that ASSK might serve as a mediator. The two sides also

⁵ Farmland owners should have liberties to do farming and grow crops under the protection of existing laws, orders and directives –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 July 2013 (p.1)

⁶ MPs urge Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to set time frame, urgently undertake suggestions of Land Grab Commission – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 July 2013 (p. 16)

⁷ All unused farmlands to be returned to original owners when scrutiny process thorough coordination over – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-17-red.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2013 (p. 16)

exchanged views on the peace process. In related news, a joint KNU-RCSS statement identified ASSK as a key stakeholder and said that usually, stakeholders do not serve as mediators.⁸

ETHNIC FEDERATION HOLDS WORKSHOP ON PEACE AND CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

Myanmar's Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF) held a two-day workshop on political dialogue and national peace and ceasefire agreements in Nay Pyi Taw. During the first day session on 13 July, the participants discussed and studied political dialogues and experiences from the international community and the political frameworks proposed by the ethnic armed groups. The talks were held in groups, and among the participants were Dr Siebert Johannes, ceasefire and political dialogue expert from South Africa and EBO Director Harn Yawngnhe. The workshop was attended by members of 13 out of 15 NBF member parties. Officials from the Chin Progressive Party were present as observers. NBF also held a similar workshop on reviewing the 2008 constitution for protection of ethnic rights in Nay Pyi Taw from July 6 to 7.⁹

ANALYSIS

The signing of the 5-point agreement between the government and Wa Special Region (2) is yet another step in working towards reaching ceasefire agreements and establishing stability in the country. Similarly, the visits to the United Kingdom and France by President Thein Sein are also clear indications that Myanmar is making progress in restoring normalisation ties with the international community. While the visit has helped in promoting the current on-going reform process, it has not been able to avoid strong criticism on the Myanmar government's handling of the communal unrest and sensitive political prisoner's issue. President Thein Sein has promised that all remaining political prisoners would be freed by year's end. Whether the President honours his promise or chooses not to do so remains to be seen.

While President Thein Sein has stressed the importance of political dialogue between the government and various ethnic armed groups, the existence of multiple armed groups as well as the varying nature of the needs of individual groups has proven that the on-going peace process is complex. Under such circumstances, the government, the ethnic armed groups and all stakeholders in the peace process will need space, increased capacity and consultations with their respective communities in order to positively move forward with the ongoing national reconciliation process.

⁸ Ethnic rebels want Suu Kyi at next peace talks with Govt – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/40059> (Irrawaddy) 15 July 2013

⁹ Ethnic federation holds workshop on peace and ceasefire agreement – <http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/2768-ethnic-federation-holds-workshop-on-peace-and-ceasefire-agreement> (Eleven News Media) 14 July 2013

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

5-POINT AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN UNION PEACE-MAKING WORK COMMITTEE AND “WA” SPECIAL REGION (2) IN KENGTUNG ON 12 JULY 2013

1. Follow the agreements that emerge from the discussion;
2. Maintain the already achieved mutual understandings, trust and fine tradition of peace and continue making cooperation for reaching eternal peace through constructive discussions;
3. Make transparent coordination as quickly as possible based on the constructive ways at a time when there emerge the military issues between Tatmadaw and UWSA;
4. Not to allow seceding “Wa” Special Region (2) from the State at any rate as “Wa” Special Region (2) is an integral part of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and to utilize the capabilities of “Wa” Special Region (2) for perpetuation of sovereignty and territory of the State;
5. Make mutual cooperation between the Union government and “Wa” Special Region (2) in development of the region and eradication of narcotic drugs.¹⁰

¹⁰ Agreement between Union Peace-Making Work Committee and “Wa” Special Region (2) at peace talks in Kengtung on 12 July 2013 – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 July 2013 (p. 16)