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## POLITICAL MONITOR NO.27

### OFFICIAL MEDIA

#### **AMNESTY GRANTED TO 73 PRISONERS**

President Thein Sein granted amnesty to 73 prisoners on humanitarian grounds and encouraged them to serve the national interest. He granted the amnesty under provisions provided in Section 204 (a) of the Constitution and 401 (1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.<sup>1</sup>

#### **KIO OPENS LIAISON OFFICE IN MYITKYINA**

The Technical Advisory Team formed under the agreement reached during the peace talks between KIO and the government in May opened its office in Myitkyina on 24 July. At the ceremony, Samlut Gum, the leader of the negotiation team of the KIO, said the team was formed in preparation for systematic peace process and would carry out measures step by step for holding political dialogues with the government while seeking advices from experts. Aung Min, Vice-Chairman of the Union Peace Making Working Committee, stressed the need for drawing a framework or roadmap which is acceptable by all including the government and all armed ethnic armed groups that can lead to peace and the holding of an all-inclusive national peace conference to reach a national peace accord. He also expressed his hope for holding talks between technical teams of both sides and for holding Union level peace talks to bring the eternal peace to Kachin State and to the country. After the ceremony, government ministers met with 13 prisoners including Brang Shaung who have been released from the prison under amnesty granted by the President.<sup>2</sup>

#### **UNION PEACE-MAKING WORK COMMITTEE CLARIFIES PEACE PROCESS**

A briefing session on the status of the on-going peace process was held at the Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon on July 21. The meeting was attended by Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann, MP Aung San Suu Kyi and Aung Min of the Union Peacemaking Work Committee (UPWC) and Chairpersons of Pyithu Hluttaw Committees. Issues related to the ongoing peace process, the emergence of the Myanmar Peace Centre, the holding of a political dialogue, legal and political affairs necessary for a political dialogue as well as the role of the parliament in the process, were discussed at the meeting.<sup>3</sup>

#### **PRESIDENT RECEIVES VICE-CHAIR OF CHINESE CENTRAL MILITARY COMMISSION**

President Thein Sein received the Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission of China, General Fan Changlong and party in Naypyitaw on 23 July. The two leaders discussed issues on peace development and stability in border areas including perpetual peace with armed groups. They also agreed to work together in promoting ties between the two governments and the two armed forces. As a second step, the two agreed to maintain a strategic and comprehensive mutual partnership. General Fan also held meetings with Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Speaker of the Lower House Thura Shwe Mann. Both Fan and Min Aung Hlaing

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty granted to 73 prisoners –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 1)

<sup>2</sup> KIO opens Technical Advisory Team to step up peace process –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2013 (p. 16)

<sup>3</sup> Union Peace-making Work Committee clarifies peace process –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-22-red.pdf> (NLM) 22 July 2013 (p. 16)

called for further cooperation to ensure effective and efficient administrative system and peace and stability in border regions and increased joint efforts in a fight against narcotic drugs.<sup>4</sup>

### **MYANMAR LEADERS RECEIVE CHAIRMAN OF VIETNAMESE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

President Thein Sein received Vietnamese delegation led by Chairman of National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Mr. Nguyen Sinh Hung at the Presidential Palace on 24 July. Discussions on friendship and amity and mutual cooperation between the two parliaments, international issues, bilateral cooperation and promoting regional peace and stability and development, investments of Vietnamese entrepreneurs in Myanmar and Vietnam's support for Myanmar's reform process. The Vietnamese delegation also called on both Speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses and discussed promoting bilateral cooperation between the two parliaments.<sup>5</sup>

### **VICE-PRESIDENT DR SAI MAUK KHAM MEETS ADVISER TO EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY**

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham received the Adviser to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Sir Robert Cooper on 23 July in Naypyitaw. The meeting focused on Myanmar's peacemaking processes, provision of assistance to tasks for implementation of peace and stability in Rakhine State and matters related to cooperation in preparedness measures to be taken in time of emergency. Sir Robert and party also held meetings with Speaker of the Lower House Thura Shwe Mann, Union Election Commission (UEC) Chairman Tin Aye and Attorney-General Dr Tun Shin. The delegation and Myanmar officials exchanged views on a wide range of issues including assistance from the EU to the Union Election Commission to hold a free and fair election in 2015 and sharing knowledge and experiences on elections.<sup>6</sup>

### **HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights**

#### **Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 13<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 23 July. During the session, 10 questions were raised and discussed, 2 bills submitted and 1 bill approved. Key issues discussed the following:

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<sup>4</sup> President receives Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission of China –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 1)/

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker holds talks with Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the PLA –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 9)/

Myanmar, China vow to boost strategic partnership –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 10)

<sup>5</sup> Myanmar, Vietnam to step up bilateral cooperation from similar standpoints of promoting regional peace, stability and development –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2013 (p. 1)/

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker meets Vietnamese National Assembly Chairman –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2013 (p. 8)/

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker, Vietnamese National Assembly Chairman sign two parliaments' cooperation agreement –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2013 (p. 16)

<sup>6</sup> Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham meets Adviser to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 1)/

UEC Chairman holds talks with EU's Special Adviser –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 1)/

Union Attorney General receives Special Adviser to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 10)/

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker holds talks with Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the PLA –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 9)

- U Kyi Myint from Latha Constituency asked if there is any **plan to amend the provisions of Burma Company Act- 1914**. In responding, Deputy Minister U Hset Aung of the National Planning and Economic Development said that **re-drawing the law was better than amending it for the sake of meeting international standard, convenience for businessmen in doing business and in applying company registration cards through online in the near future**. Therefore, measures have been taken to re-draw the Burma Company Act-1914 with assistance of Asian Development Bank since it has taken about 100 years and it is not in conformity with the current situation;
- The Hluttaw approved the signing of an agreement on cooperation between Myanmar and Vietnam parliaments.<sup>7</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 14<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 24 July. During the session, the following key issue was raised and discussed:

- U Aung Sein of Manaung Constituency raised the **question and asked the status of the Myanmar-India-China border demarcation**. In responding, the Deputy Foreign Minister U Thant Kyaw, said that the **border demarcation between Myanmar and India is 907 miles**, the Myanmar-India-China border demarcation at tri-point had not been completed due to Sino-India border dispute; while Myanmar-India boundary agreement was signed on 1967 and the survey works were completed in 1975. He also stated that the border demarcation between Myanmar and India, Myanmar and China and Myanmar and Thailand had already been established.<sup>8</sup>

## HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

### Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 13<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 23 July. During the session questions raised and answered:

- U Toe Win of Taninthayi Region Constituency No (12) raised the question the **measures put in place by local and regional authorities to counter the smuggling unlicensed vehicles into the country via 40 routes and places where security is weak in the states and regions concerned**. In responding, the Deputy Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint Hsan stated that **action had been taken against smugglers and that more checks would be conducted at all possible routes**;
- The Amyotha Hluttaw session also approved the bill amending the National Food Law.<sup>9</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 14<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 24 July. During the session the following issues were discussed, answered and approved:

- the Hluttaw session, approved the reformation of **Bill Committee, Public Accounts Committee, Hluttaw Rights Committee and Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertaking Vetting Committee and the list of the names of chairmen, secretaries and members of the committees**;
- Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee, read out the report of the committee on the bill amending the Union Judiciary Law. The bill was approved by the session;

<sup>7</sup> Burma Company Act-1914 to be amended –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 10)

<sup>8</sup> Advance income tax collection on export and import means to avoid tax exemption, to ensure healthy tax culture –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2013 (p. 9)

<sup>9</sup> More surprise checks against car smuggling will be conducted at all possible routes –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 July 2013 (p. 16)

- U San Tun of Kachin State Constituency No (11) called for the inspection tour of prisons, camps and detention centres by the Chief Justice of the Union and to oversee prisons and camps by the Judges of respective regions and states.<sup>10</sup>

## UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

### BATTLES ONGOING IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE

The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) have confirmed that a battle between their forces and the Myanmar army broke out on 23 July near Phai Kaung in Pang Seng Township, Mone Goe Region and that the situation remains tense.

A KIO spokesman said that hostilities flared when government troops advanced on KIO 4th Division positions and a TNLA encampment in northern Shan State.

Kachin Battalion Commander Zaw Saing said that government forces attacked them with heavy artillery but to date no one had been killed. Saing also stated that the Myanmar army's manoeuvre were a "potential obstacle to peace." Capt. Mine Bhone Kyaw, from the Palaung army, also said that the battle lasted about an hour and involved about 700 soldiers from the government forces' belonging to the 506<sup>th</sup> Battalion.<sup>11</sup>

### LANDMINES: KNU SAYS DEMINING DEPENDS ON PEACE-BUILDING PROGRESS

The Karen Nation Union (KNU)'s General-Secretary, Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win, said that mine clearance in KNU controlled areas depend on ceasefire conditions and if a level of trust with the government could be reached. Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win said that given the current status of peace talks it was not the right time to discuss demining. He added that for the time being, there is no systematic plan for demining in KNU controlled areas. The KNU had been using the ceasefire period to document landmines and provide mine risk education awareness in the region.

Members of Karen armed groups denied media reports that all five Karen armed groups – the KNU, the Peace Council, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), the Border Guard Force (BGF) and the Phayar Gone Peace group had agreed at a meeting on July 13 to start the demining process in Karen State.<sup>12</sup>

### ANALYSIS

The visit by Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission General Fan Changlong once again is an indication on China's concerns as the government in Naypyitaw realigns its foreign policy towards the US and EU countries. Fan's visit will no doubt bring reassurance and more importantly in promoting the special "Phauk-phaw" friendship which has become a key in Sino-Myanmar relations. In the past, when Western powers shunned Myanmar for its rights abuses and imposed economic sanctions, China enjoyed unrivalled access and privileges from its neighbour. However, the winds of change have blown and President Thein Sein's reform process has been welcomed and acknowledged by the west and Beijing must now not only accommodate Myanmar but also acknowledge the growing presence of western governments in the country.

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<sup>10</sup> Amyotha Hluttaw approves Union Judiciary Law –  
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2013 (p. 9)

<sup>11</sup> Battles ongoing in northern Shan State –  
<http://mizzima.com/news/ethnic-issues/9737-battles-ongoing-in-northern-shan-state> (Mizzima) 25 July 2013

<sup>12</sup> Landmines: KNU says demining depends on peace-building progress –  
<http://karennews.org/2013/07/landmines-knu-says-deminig-depends-on-peace-building-progress.html/> (Karen News)  
20 July 2013

And if Beijing is keen to reassert its influence in Myanmar, it will do well in engaging with not only the government in Naypyitaw but in gaining the trust of the Myanmar public. The multi-billion dollar Myitsone dam project funded by the Chinese has caused nation-wide anger and led to protests in Myanmar. Under such circumstances, China will first need to promote its image and to do so adopt environmentally friendly and socially accepted norms and practices in pursuing its economic interests in Myanmar. Similarly, the Chinese government due to its close ties and geographic nature has become more involved with the on-going democratic transition and national reconciliation process. However, such involvement will need to be explored with caution by both sides.