

## POLITICAL MONITOR NO.28

### OFFICIAL MEDIA

#### COMMUNAL UNRESTS ERUPTS IN KANTBALU, SAGAING REGION

Fresh outbreak of communal unrest erupted in Kantbalu, in central Sagaing, after a Muslim man was arrested on suspicion of attempting to rape a Buddhist woman on 24 August. The riot in Htan Kon, south of the town of Kantbalu, began late on Saturday after a crowd surrounded a police station, demanding that the suspect Hsan Min Oo be handed over. When their demands were refused, the mob set fire to nearby houses, shops and local businesses. State television reported that about 42 houses and 15 shops – most belonging to Muslims – were burned and destroyed before security forces shot in the air to disperse the mob early on Sunday. According to state-run media, 12 suspects have been detained by the security personnel in connection to the violence.<sup>1</sup>

#### MYANMAR, US FOCUS ON FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONS

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received US Ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell, in Yangon on 29 August. They exchanged views on further strengthening of relations between the armed forces of Myanmar and the US, the important role of the Tatmadaw in the democratization process in Myanmar, the role of Defence Service Personnel Representatives in the Hluttaw, matters related to the constitution, internal peace-making processes, and measures of defence, security and rule of law for the State.<sup>2</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 26<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 26 August. At the session, the following questions were raised and answered.

- U Win Oo of Yebyu Constituency raised the question **collection of fees from issuance of visa at Myanmar embassies abroad**. Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Tin Oo Lwin, stated that Myanmar Embassies and missions abroad collected euro 11,179,902 (US\$ 13,486,779) from issuance of visas yearly and hand over various kinds of foreign exchange obtained from issuance of visa to the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank and the Ministry of Immigration and Population respectively. He also added that the collected income taxes are handed over to the Ministry of Finance and for renewal and issuance of passports to Ministry of Home Affairs respectively.
- The Pyithu Hluttaw Judicial, Legal and Complaint and Appeal Scrutiny Committee submitted the Writ Application Bill 2013 and the Bill Committee read the report on the former Writ Bill.<sup>3</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 27<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 29 August. At the session, the following questions were raised and answered.

- Sai Win Khaing of Hsenwi Constituency raised the question on safety measures and use of pesticides in the country. Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Ohn Than replied that the ministry had promulgated the Pesticides Law, provided training courses on systematic use of pesticides and pamphlets in Shan and Pa-O

<sup>1</sup> Attempted sexual assault in Kantbalu Township stirs violence – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-26-red.pdf> (NLM) 26 August 2013 (p.16 & 9)

<sup>2</sup> Myanmar, US focus on further strengthening of relations between two armed forces – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-30-red.pdf> (NLM) 30 August 2013 (p. 16)

<sup>3</sup> No plan to raise monthly cash award for honorary title winners – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-27-red.pdf> (NLM) 27 August 2013 (p. 16)

languages have been distributed. MP U Soe Win Khaing also added that **farmer educative works should be given on a wider scale, radio programmes should be aired through in Wa, Palaung and Kokang languages in the Shan State.**<sup>4</sup>

#### **Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 25<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 23 August. The following bills were submitted for discussion during the session;

- **The Printing and Publishing Enterprise Bill and the Bill on Promoting Farmers' Interests** were discussed at the session;
- The Hluttaw approved to discuss **the Media Bill** submitted by MP U Phone Myint Aung of Yangon Region Constituency No.3.<sup>5</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 26<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 26 August. The following bills were submitted for discussion during the session;

- Dr Aye Maung of Rakhine State Constituency No 1 submitted the **Bill Amending Political Parties Registration Law** for discussion;
- Bill Committee member U Myint Tun read the report of the committee on **Printing and Publishing Enterprise Bill** sent by Pyithu Hluttaw with amendments. The Hluttaw session approved the Bill.<sup>6</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 27<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 28 August. The following bills were submitted and approved during the session;

- **The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Bill was approved** at Amyotha Hluttaw Session;
- Five MPs held **discussions on the Media Bill** which was submitted by MP U Phone Myint Aung of Yangon Region Constituency No.3.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Session**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convened its 17<sup>th</sup> day session on 27 August. During the session, the following questions, proposals discussed, and bills approved:

- Daw Khin Waing Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No. 1 discussed **the report submitted by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Employee and Employer Rights Observation Joint Commission;**
- **The Telecommunications Bill** was approved at the session. The bill will allow the development of the country's telecommunications technology and also see more participation by private sectors in developing the sector;
- The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session gave its **approval on the formation of the Myanmar Constitutional Review Joint Committee.** Prior to which the Secretary of the Constitution Review Joint Committee U Aye Mauk read out the objectives, terms, duties, powers, procedures and rights of the Review Committee.
- The session also **recorded the Bill amending eye donation law, the Bill amending the Union Judicial law, the Bill amending the Marine Traffic Act and the Bill**

<sup>4</sup> A&I Ministry allows six groups of pesticides –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-29-red.pdf> (NLM) 29 August 2013 (p. 16)

<sup>5</sup> Amyotha Hluttaw approves to discuss Media Bill –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 August 2013 (p. 1)

<sup>6</sup> Printing and Publishing Enterprise Bill approved –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-27-red.pdf> (NLM) 27 August 2013 (p. 16)

<sup>7</sup> Amyotha Hluttaw approves Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Bill –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-29-red.pdf> (NLM) 29 August 2013 (p. 16)

**amending Defile Traffic act** which had been approved by both the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw.<sup>8</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convened its 18<sup>th</sup> day session on 29 August. The following questions and bills were discussed and approved:

- Union ministers held discussion **on acquiring a loan of 261.50 million USD from the World Bank (WB)** at the final day session of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. Minister for Finance U Win Shein and Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Min Aung said that loan would be used to support various development projects;
- 3 MPs discussed **the Public Accounts Joint Committee's report (5/2013) on Union Auditor-General's important findings on 2nd bi-annual budget (2011-2012 FY)**. The report was approved by the Hluttaw;
- The Hluttaw also approved **the Farmers' Rights Protection and Interests Promoting Bill**.<sup>9</sup>

## UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

### ONGOING CLASHES THREATEN KACHIN PEACE TALKS

Despite the signing of the seven-point agreement signed at the end of May's peace talks between the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the government, fighting continued in northern Kachin and Shan states. According to KIA officials in the Laiza headquarters, clashes have been reported around Law Hkawng and Myaw Jawng areas on the east side of N'Mai Hka river in Chipwi Township. A combined force of Burma Army Light Infantry battalion 521, border guard force (BGF) and local militia attacked a Kachin Independence Army (KIA) Battalion No.10 post in Law Hkawng on August 17. Similarly, fighting has also increased in KIA 4th Brigade controlled areas of Muse, Kutkai, Mantong, Momeik townships in Shan State. In particular clashes have broken out near the completed Shwe Gas Pipeline.<sup>10</sup>

### OPPOSITION NLD TO CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF CONSTITUTION

The opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) will launch a campaign to educate the public about the constitutional amendments according to its leader Aung San Suu Kyi. "All can give suggestions over the constitution. We are planning to give public education about the constitutional amendments. This is because the people need to understand the constitution. Most do not know what the constitution carries. Few people read it. It is also difficult to get all the people to read the constitution," said the opposition leader. In a meeting with her party members on 22 August in Naypyitaw, Suu Kyi said that the NLD headquarters would lead the educative campaign in cooperation with the party's members of parliament and provide necessary instructions and stressed the need for NLD members to campaign in a correct way and based on democratic procedures.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves Communications Bill – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-28-red.pdf> (NLM) 28 August 2013 (p.16)

<sup>9</sup> Myanmar to get loan of 261.50 million USD from WB – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-08-30-red.pdf> (NLM) 30 August 2013 (p. 16)

<sup>10</sup> Ongoing clashes threaten Kachin peace talks – <http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2552-ongoing-clashes-threaten-kachin-peace-talks.html> (KNG) 29 August 2013/  
KIA troops battle joint government's forces – <http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=23623> (KLN) 30 August 2013

<sup>11</sup> Opposition NLD to campaign for public knowledge of constitution – <http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/3170-opposition-nld-to-campaign-for-public-knowledge-of-constitution> (Eleven News Media) 24 August 2013

## **ANALYSIS**

Myanmar's democratic transition and its efforts in ending decades of fighting and deep-rooted national divide, has once again been confronted by the communal unrests in Htan Kon, Sagaing Region and clashes in Shan and Kachin States. The latest violence in Sagaing Region is not only a sign of a more dangerous trend but more importantly it highlights the failure of the government in addressing anti-Muslim sentiments in the country. Myanmar's current reform process cannot be seen as truly democratic and peaceful when political, racial and religious freedom of individuals cannot be protected and practiced freely.

While confronting intra-communal unrests, the government will also need to find ways in to achieve genuine peace with the all ethnic nationalities. All forms of fighting must be ended and a nation-wide political dialogue with all stakeholders must be established to achieve peace.