
POLITICAL MONITOR NO.38

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN RECEIVES FORMER US PRESIDENT CLINTON

President Thein Sein received former US President Bill Clinton on 14 November and discussed cooperation with the Clinton Foundation, assistance to Burma's peace process, distribution of medicine to people living with HIV, AIDS and TB, development of farming in conflict-hit areas as well as agriculture, health and energy sectors. Clinton also called on Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura Shwe Mann and exchanged views on supports for Burma's political reform and matters related to development and peace and stability in Burma.¹

EU-MYANMAR TASK FORCE MEETING HELD

A delegation led by High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton arrived in Yangon on 13 November to attend the first Myanmar-EU Task Force Plenary Meeting. The establishment of an EU-Myanmar Task Force was announced in March earlier this year and aims to provide comprehensive support to the transition in Burma by bringing together all of the tools and mechanisms – both political and economic (development aid, peace process support, investments).

The first EU-Myanmar Task Force meeting was convened on 14 November and chaired by the EU's foreign policy and security chief, Catherine Ashton and Minister at the President's Office Soe Thane. Ashton stated that the objectives of the Task Force are to support Myanmar's economic reform and democracy transition process, to enhance development partnership between Burma and the EU and to boost opportunities for economic growth and development. According to a press release of the European Commission, EU development aid could rise to €90 million per year to fund Burma's rural development, education, governance and peace building from 2014-2020.

During the visit, the EU High Representative met Burmese President Thein Sein on 14 November and discussed Burma's political and economic reforms, peace-building process, poverty alleviation and development of agriculture sectors and cooperation in the sectors of peace, democracy, development, trade and international relations that includes in EU's Comprehensive Framework.² *(Please see Appendix A for the full text of the press release).*

OIC SECRETARY GENERAL CALLS ON VICE-PRESIDENT DR SAI MAUK KHAM

Burmese Vice-President Sai Mauk Kham received the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu on 15 November and discussed peace and stability of Rakhine State and rehabilitation tasks being carried out in the region. The OIC delegation also called on Deputy Speaker the Union Parliament Nanda Kyaw Swa in Naypyitaw and also held talks with leaders of four religions led by Patron of Interfaith Dialogue Group of Myanmar U Hla Maung.

¹ President U Thein Sein receives Former US President –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (p. 1) /
Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives former US President –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (p. 9)

² Delegation of European Union arrives in Yangon –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-14-red.pdf> (NLM) 14 November 2013 (p. 1) /
President U Thein Sein receives High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/ Vice-President of the European Commission –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (p. 9) /
U to build economic, political partnership with Myanmar –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (p. 16) /
Commissioner Piebalgs in Myanmar to reinforce development cooperation (IP/13/1071)–
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1071_en.htm?locale=en (European Commission) 14 November 2013

The delegation also visited Sittwe and Maungtaw townships as well as relief camps on 15 November and reiterated that the OIC was keen to provide to give a helping hand in regional development tasks and also stressed the importance of peace and stability in the Rakhine State.³

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 17th day meeting on 1 November. During the session:

- U Ba Shein of Kyaukpyu Constituency raised the question on compensation to farmers affected in Madaykyun gas pipeline project implemented by the CNPC Company of China in the Rakhine State. Deputy Minister for Energy U Myint Zaw replied that **over K 1200 million as compensation had been provided for confiscation of farmlands, horticultural lands and croplands to farmers in Kyaukpyu Township. The deputy minister said that compensation worth over 4020 million kyats have been given to farmers for permanently confiscated farmlands and over K 148 million for temporarily confiscated lands in Rakhine State from 2010 to 2014. Moreover, compensation has been given as over K 85 million for farmlands damaged in 2012 rainy season and over K 63 million in 2013. A total of 209 farmers of An Township have got more than K 37 million for 61.112 acres of farmlands.**
- U Sai Bo Aung of Muse Constituency asked **whether there is plan to amend or revoke the 1908 Unlawful Association Act.** Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun replied that **deterrent action will be taken against those who committed the terrorist activity that may disrupt the rule of law and peace and stability. As the terrorist activity may occur at any time, the Unlawful Association Act should not be revoked. In conformity with the progress of political progress, the law should be amended. The Hluttaw discussed and approved the bill amending the 1954 state memorials act.**⁴

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 18th day meeting on 4 November. During the session:

- **The session approved the Media Bill** today after discussing the bill's paragraphs amended by Amyotha Hluttaw.
- Daw Khin Saw Wai of Rathedaung Constituency has urged the Union Government **to urgently carry out the combined measures for security, immigration and administration which are better than the ones in the past for the sake of the national interests of Rakhine State.** Deputy Minister for Border Affairs, Maj-Gen Maung Maung Ohn replied that **the Government has been implementing the short-term and long-term plans for peace and stability in Buthidaung and Maungtaw in Rakhine State. He also urged Pyithu Hluttaw to put the proposal on record as the Union Government would review the proposal to be able to ensure overcoming challenges in the state. For the peaceful coexistence of the communities in Rakhine State, the government has worked hard to improve the socio-economy of local people and Maungtaw region has enjoyed community peace, the Deputy Minister said. The government is also seeking ways for timely completion of taking census in the areas in 2014 and taking measures for granting**

³ OIC delegation arrives in Nay Pyi Taw –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-14-red.pdf> (NLM) 14 November 2013 (NLM) 14 November 2013 (p. 9) /

OIC Secretary General calls on Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (p. 16) /

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker meets OIC delegation –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (NLM) 15 November 2013

⁴ Unlawful Association Act should be amended in conformity with political progress –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-02-red.pdf> (NLM) 2 November 2013 (p. 16)

citizenship to eligible people and for tackling the issue related to illegal migrants in accordance with the law, he added.⁵

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 19th day meeting on 6 November. During the session:

- U Tin Htay Aung of Yezagyo Constituency raised the question on extension of period to register farmlands. Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Ohn replied that **registration for farmlands will be carried out across the nation in the 2013-2014 fiscal year. Region and state Farmland management committees are issuing farming rights certificates to the farmers as quickly as possible and they will carry out cent per cent completion of issuance of certificates.** MP U Thaug Han of Yinmabin Constituency, called on parliament for the registration period to be extended till March 2014.⁶

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 20th day meeting on 11 November. During the session:

- MP Daw Khin Than Myint from Ngaputaw Constituency raised a question **whether there are plans or not to raise regional development fund for the townships from rural area development fund.** Deputy Minister for Livestock Breeding, Fisheries and Rural Development Dr Aung Myat Oo replied that **efforts are being made to carry out construction of rural road, bridge, supply of water and electrification with village development fund.**
- Daw Tin Nwe Oo of Dagon Myothit (North) Constituency submitted a proposal **urging the President to collect stamp duty and fine for evasion of stamp duty related to transfer of immovable property sold by State-owned assets management committee of the Union Government.**
- U T Khun Myat of Kutkai Constituency submitted a proposal entitled **National Race's Rights Protection Bill** and called for the formation of a union-level ministry to link respective region and states.
- U Thein Lwin of Chauk Constituency put forward an urgent proposal **urging the Hluttaw representatives to participate in the ceremonies at respective towns and regions in coordination with township management committee, regional development supportive committee, towns-elders and social organizations in accord with rules and regulations.** The motion was put on record.
- MP Daw Khin Than Myint from Ngaputaw Constituency raised a question **whether there are plans or not to raise regional development fund for the townships from rural area development fund.** Deputy Minister for Livestock Breeding, Fisheries and Rural Development Dr Aung Myat Oo replied that **efforts are being made to carry out construction of rural road, bridge, supply of water and electrification with village development fund.**⁷

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 21st day meeting on 13 November. During the session;

- MP U Kyi Tha of Gwa Constituency raised the question on **functions and duties of 26 Cabinet Subcommittee/Delivery Units of the Union government and lineage between Sub-committee chairmen, Sub-committee and Pyithu Hluttaw Affairs Committee.** Deputy Minister at the President Office U Thant Shin replied that **the Union government has set up Subcommittee/Delivery Units with the aims of making coordination between the Cabinet, the Hluttaws, the ministries and region/ state governments in an attempt to get tangible results**

⁵ Pyithu Hluttaw approves Media Bill – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2013 (p.16 & 9)

⁶ Farmland management committees to carry out issuance of farming rights certificates – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-07-red.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2013 (p.16 & 9)

⁷ Early Child Care and Development Bill approved – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-12-red.pdf> (NLM) 12 November 2013 (p.16 & 9)

during the remaining 30 months of its reign. The aim is to address the issues on the ground by making field trips to regions/states For smooth relations between the government and the Hluttaws, officials from the Sub-committee are to make discussions and then to submit their reports at respective Sub-committee meetings.

- MP U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun Constituency submitted a proposal urging the Union government to circulate the bank notes bearing the image of General Aung San. Daw Khin Saw Oo, Vice-Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar replied that the Central Bank will issue bank notes bearing the images of country's prominent leaders, buildings, landscapes and emblems with the permission of the Union government.
- Thura U Aung Ko, Chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw Legislative and Judicial Affairs and Complaints Letters and Petition Scrutinizing Committee, submitted a proposal on the Bill amending the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. The Hluttaw approved to discuss the proposal.⁸

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 22nd day meeting on 14 November. During the session:

- MP U Kyi Tha of Gwa Constituency raised a question on benchmarks for aims and objectives of 15-year plan beyond 2015. Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Daw Le Le Thein replied that the 15-year plan beyond 2015 is a part of the National Comprehensive Development Plan (2011-2031). It will be implemented with four five-year plans. Framework for Economic and Social Reform which is jointly adopted by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and MDRI, is a crucial policy for attaining the country's goals of short and long term plans. The Framework is aimed at bridging the National Comprehensive Development Plan and reform processes and at enabling Burma to revive economic development like other Asian countries. The plan is being drafted by the ministry in cooperation with respective ministries, region/state governments and economist at home and abroad. Challenges and opportunities, reviews of McKinsey and ERIA's Myanmar Comprehensive Development Vision (2011-2035) and OECD's reviews will be put in the plan. For people-centered development, the plan also includes multi- sector development and regional development.⁹

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 12th day meeting on 1 November. During the session:

- MP U Tun Zaw (a) Ko Pauk of Bago Region Constituency No. 12 raised a question on the systematic appointment of staff members in townships offices. Union Minister at President Office U Soe Maung said that Section 257 of the Constitution states that "The Region or State Government may, for enabling the performance of the functions to be carried out in accord with the Union Law for Civil Services and in co-ordination with the Union Government in advance: (a) form Civil Services organizations relating to the Region or State as necessary; (b) appoint the required number of Civil Services personnel." The vacant posts of lower division clerk in Okpo Township Law Office, Thayawady District, Bago Region have been filled on 30 September 2013, he added.¹⁰

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 14th day meeting on 4 November. During the session:

⁸ Bank notes bearing the images of country's prominent leaders to be issued – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-14-red.pdf> (NLM) 14 November 2013 (p.16 & 9)

⁹ Eighth Regular Session of First Pyithu Hluttaw concludes – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (p.16 & 9)

¹⁰ Amyotha Hluttaw approves Myanmar Engineering Council Bill – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-02-red.pdf> (NLM) 2 November 2013 (p. 16)

- Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Lin Aung submitted a bill amending the salaries, allowance and insignia law for Union level individuals, a bill amending the salaries, allowance and insignia law for region or state level individuals and a bill amending the salaries, allowance and insignia law for self-administered division or zone leading body chairman and CEC members.
- Regarding the bill amending the allowance, expenditure and insignia law for Union level persons, Bill Committee members U Saw Maw Tun, U Sun Doke Ciint, and U Aung Kyi Nyunt discussed and submitted the reports on amendments in the bill amending the salaries, allowance and insignia law for self-administered division or zone leading body chairman and CEC members. The Hluttaw decided to discuss the bill amending the salaries, allowance and insignia law for Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman and members, the bill amending the salaries and allowances for MPs of Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Region or State Hluttaw and leading body members of Self-Administered Division or Zone and the bill amending the Myanmar Mining Law.¹¹

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 17th day meeting on 13 November. During the session:

- The Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw said that it is necessary that the Union government compile the list of salaries, allowances and insignia at reasonable rates concerning the Bill Amending the salaries, allowances and insignia of Union level person, the Bill Amending the salaries, allowances and insignia of region or state level persons, the Bill Amending the salaries, allowances and insignia of chairmen and executives of Self-Administered Division and Zone Leading Bodies, the Bill Amending the salaries, allowances and insignia of the chairman and members of Nay Pyi Taw Council, MPs of Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw, Region or State Hluttaws, and members of Self- Administered Division and Zone Leading Bodies to the Hluttaw. The Hluttaw will discuss and decide the bills in the upcoming sessions.¹²

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 18th day meeting on 14 November. During the session:

- U Ne Win Tun (chairman of mining and resources affairs committee) of Shan State Constituency No (9) to discuss the **bill amending the Myanmar Gems Law. The bill is aimed at collecting taxes and revenues correctly from gems mining, developing gems market in accord with the market economy and controlling gems smuggling.**¹³

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 9th day meeting on 5 November. During the session:

- Additional Budget Allocation Bill for 2013-2014 FY was discussed at 9th day session. Regarding the questions and issues raised, Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Maung Maung Ohn replied that the budget earmarked for 2013-2014 FY for Shan State (north, south and east) and self-administrated regions is K 41920.123 million. Its budget is much more than other region/state as Shan State is the largest state in Myanmar.
- The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also approved the Additional Budget Allocation Bill for 2013-2014 FY. The session also put on record the message sent by the President to the Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on spending K1690.113 million by Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and K10.100 million by Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement from the specific

¹¹ Salaries, allowances, insignia for authorities at different level discussed at Amyotha Hluttaw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2013 (p. 16)

¹² Licences issued to operate hot air balloon service for tourists after scrutiny – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-14-red.pdf> (NLM) 14 November 2013 (p. 16 & 9)

¹³ First Amyotha Hluttaw eighth regular session concludes – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2013 (p. 16)

fund of the Union Budget Law for 2013. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also put on record the message sent by the President on settling the land grabbing issues included in the report 1, 2 and 3 of the land grabbing investigation commission. Regarding the expenditure in first six months of 2013-14 FY, findings, complaints and actions of the Office of the Auditor-General of the Union were clarified by the Joint Public Accounts Committee.¹⁴

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 10th day meeting on 7 November. During the session:

- The Hluttaw approved taking a soft loan of 60 million USD from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the development of electricity supply network in Yangon, Mandalay and Magway Regions. A total of 60 million USD from the ADB and State's fund of K 13,426 million will be spent on the project, it is reported.
- The Joint Committee for Reviewing the Constitution's meeting (3/2013) resolutions were also approved.
- Four MPs discussed Joint Public Accounts Committee's report (7/2013) on Union Auditor-General Office's findings and actions taken for the first six months of 2012-2013 FY.¹⁵

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 11th day meeting on 8 November. During the session:

- U Aye Mauk, Secretary of Planning and Financial Development Committee, submitted an urgent proposal calling on the Union Government for reviewing the Ministry of Electric Power's announcement that November's household electricity rates will increase by about two folds for every unit used over 100 kilowatt hours as the hike has caused troubles for the people and for putting forward the issue to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw after reviewing it. He also suggested the Union Government to increase rates for the 200 to 300 units instead of 100 units and to reduce the rate increase for above 200 units.
- U Aye Mauk also suggested that the ministry should review and carry out an assessment of the current situation of the ministry instead of increasing the price to cover its losses from selling electricity to the people.
- Ministries concerned clarified the Joint Public Accounts Committee's 7/2013 report on findings, objections and actions which have been taken by the Office of the Union Auditor-General over the expenditure of the budget for the first six months of the 2012-13 FY.
- U Aung Thein Lin of South Okkalapa Constituency submitted a proposal urging the Union Government to urgently take actions against complaints after the report 1, 2 and 3 of the land grabbing investigation commission was submitted to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and other reports to the administrative bodies concerned.¹⁶

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

EU BEGINS 'CROWD CONTROL' TRAINING FOR BURMESE POLICE

The European Union began on 5 November a €10 million (US\$13.5 million) programme to provide riot control training to the Burmese police force, following a request from opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The 10-month course, which will be provided by EU officials, is expected to include "crowd control" strategies, capacity building training and the provision of riot control gear, state media reported. It was not immediately clear how the provision of riot gear would avoid breaching the EU's arms embargo against Burma, which has been in place since 1996. The first session will be

¹⁴ Region's budget request is three times higher than those of seven other states – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-06-red.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2013 (p. 16 & 9)

¹⁵ Getting ADB's soft loan of 60 million USD for development of electricity supply agreed in principle – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-08-red.pdf> (NLM) 8 November 2013 (p. 16 & 9)

¹⁶ Electric Power Ministry to review household electricity rates – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-09-red.pdf> (NLM) 9 November 2013 (p.16 & 9)

carried out between 4-20 November at the 8th Combat Police Battalion Headquarters in Rangoon and attended by 200 personnel.

A spokesperson for the EU insisted that the programme is intended to boost the capacity of the Burmese police force and to train officers on “efficient” crowd control, as well as to reform policing practices. The head of the EU’s delegation to Burma, Roland Kobia, reportedly said the training would educate police officers on transparency and public communication, human rights and crime prevention, along with international good practice standards. It is being carried out in response to a request from President Thein Sein, based on a recommendation by the Latpadaung Investigation Commission, which was tasked with investigating a botched crackdown on peaceful anti-mine protestors in November 2012.¹⁷

ETHNIC ALLIANCE SUPPORT FOR ETHNIC RIGHTS

Daw Chin Chin, director of the Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF), told local news media that the Federation is collecting evidence that supports the inclusion of the rights of ethnic people in Burma’s constitution. “We are working to ensure that ethnic people receive fair and equal treatment, two things that they are not granted under the 2008 constitution,” she said. She explained that the NBF realized the severe implications of the lack of these rights after it examined the results of three workshops. The organization will submit these findings to the committee currently analyzing and assessing the constitution along with several other requests. “We also want to change the fact that regional Chief Ministers are not chosen by the people but by the president,” Daw Chin Chin added. “Although intended to protect the cultures of ethnic peoples, this simply suppresses the development of ethnic languages, literacy, and arts.”

Additionally, the NBF will request the passage of a law that would allow members of ethnic groups to hold administrative positions in the political, educational, and health sectors. Salai Nge Pee, secretary of the Chin National Party (CNP), a division of the NBF, insists that it is essential to add an ethnic rights law to the constitution. “Ethnic people will only be able to take full advantage of their rights when such a bill is made into law,” he said.¹⁸

TENSIONS PEAK IN MAN SI, KACHIN STATE

Joon Aung, commander of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA)’s twelfth battalion, told local media on 5 November that the friction between KIA and government troops in Man Si Township continues to mount. “Government troops are moving around everywhere,” he said. “A battle could break out at any moment. We will fight back if they attack us. We never know what will happen next. This is how things are these days.” Nine government battalions are currently stationed around Mone Dane Par Village, Kaung Jar Village, and Kaung Yun Village in Man Si Township, Kachin State. Fighting erupted between the two armies last week but ceased by 4 November. As a result of this surge in violence, a stream of refugees fled to camps in Namt Lin Par Village. “There are now approximately 2,500 refugees in [the Namt Lin Par area], and the camps are facing a food shortage,” said U Dwel Pi Sar, Chief of the KIO Refugee Relief Committee. “We had to send bags of rice on foot through the forest to them. The rice was generously provided by the Ga Yu Nar Foundation.” Within recent weeks, the number of refugees in KIO-controlled territory increased from 77,000 to 88,000.¹⁹

¹⁷ EU begins ‘crowd control’ training for Burmese police – <http://english.dvb.no/news/eu-begins-crowd-control-training-for-burmese-police/34210> (DVB) 6 November 2013

¹⁸ Ethnic rallying support for ethnic rights – <http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/ethnic-issues/item/10515-nbf-rallying-support-for-ethnic-rights> (Mizzima) 6 November 2013

¹⁹ Tensions peak in Man Si Township – <http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/politics/item/10513-tensions-peakin-man-si-township> (Mizzima) 6 November 2013

KNU AND GOVT AGREE TO WORK TOGETHER ON LAND ISSUES

The Karen National Union and the government have agreed to work together to try to solve contentious land issues, including confiscation. At the regional level meeting between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Tanintharyi government, both sides agreed that the KNU and government would discuss and cooperate on land issues.

The meeting between the KNU Mergui-Tavoy District leaders and Tanintharyi government ministers held in Dawei Town on November 8, the government reached agreement with the KNU on the recognition of Karen villages customary land rights, the recognition of the KNU land measurement of Karen villagers' land and for the KNU to establish reservoirs of forest land and wildlife sanctuaries.

The KNU Mergui-Tavoy District chairman, P'doh Saw Beeler said, the KNU and the Tanintharyi government discussed ways to resolve land disputes, especially Karen villagers land confiscated for agriculture projects. "The Karen villager's lands that were confiscated for agricultural projects is complicate. We were unable to reach any detailed agreement. The government said that it would try to resolve it. The KNU will discuss the issue further and we will cooperate with the government."²⁰

FEDERAL UNION PARTY SELECTS LEADERS IN LEAD-UP TO PARTY REGISTRATION

The Federal Union Party (FUP) held a meeting on 6 November to select its leaders in preparation for party registration. The convention was held at FUP offices in Lanmadaw Township, Rangoon Division. Two chief leaders were selected at the meeting as representatives of the party's 16 members; Dr. Kan Cin Dal from Chin state and Saw Than Myint of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party.

Discussions on the party's flag, symbol and policy were also raised during the meeting. Saw Myint Than said that the FUP would select executive committee members for the party by the first week of December. "This is the first plenary meeting of all 16 members. We have already drawn the party's constitution and principles, and we have drawn up requests for amendment," said Nai Khin Maung, a Mon representative of FUP.

Mon representatives Nai Khin Maung, Nai Chan Htoy, Mi Myint Myint Wai and Min On Sorm attended the meeting. The FUP was given approval from Election Commission on 28 October to form political party.

The party is comprised of 16 Nationalities Brotherhood Federation members, and several other ethnic political parties will also be joining the party. The FUP members aim to contest in constituencies where individual ethnic political parties cannot, where they will compete with National League for Democracy (NLD), Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and National Unity Party (NUP).²¹

RCSS PLAY WAIT-AND-SEE ON NATIONWIDE CEASEFIRE DECISION

The Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS) has released a statement saying the group will only make a decision on the signing of a nationwide ceasefire agreement after it sees the results of the upcoming meeting between more than a dozen ethnic armed groups and a Burmese government delegation scheduled to be held in December in the Karen state capital Hpa-an. In its 9 November statement, the RCSS said that with regards to the 11-point agreement reached at a conference in Laiza earlier in November, the RCSS is "completely in agreement in principle".

"Concerning the signing of the [ceasefire] agreement, however, the RCSS will make a decision after approval by the Committee for Shan State Unity (CSSU) and the upcoming meeting between the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) and the Union Peacemaking Work Committee

²⁰ KNU and govt agree to work together on land issues – <http://karennews.org/2013/11/knu-and-govt-agree-to-work-together-on-land-issues.html/> (Karen News) 12 November 2013

²¹ FUP selects leaders in lead-up to party registration – <http://monnews.org/2013/11/08/fup-selects-leaders-lead-party-registration/> (IMNA) 9 November 2013

(UPWC), over the 14-point Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement proposed by the Myanmar government, to be held at Hpa-an in Karen State in December 2013,” the statement said.

Maj Sai La, a Shan army spokesman, elaborated by saying that the RCSS will sign the agreement only if the talks in Hpa-an can guarantee a genuine ceasefire. “Although we already have a ceasefire agreement in place, there are still clashes taking place.” Sai La also added by saying that, a date should be set to initiate political dialogue and noted that such a meeting should include all concerned parties, not only armed groups. The RCSS was the only armed group out of 18 represented at the Laiza talks on 30 October– 3 November which refused to sign an agreement to conditionally support a nationwide ceasefire.²²

TA’ANG NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY REBELS REJECT GOVT CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL, CLASH WITH BURMA ARMY

About a week after the government offered 17 ethnic armed groups a nationwide ceasefire proposal, one group—the ethnic Palaung—has stated that they reject the conditions set out in the draft agreement. On 6 November, the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), a rebel group based in the northern part of Shan State, said they would not agree to the government’s ceasefire proposal. “We all need to disarm, according to their draft agreement. Then, they [the government] will hold a political dialogue if we respect their draft agreement. It will be difficult for our ethnic groups to agree to disarm,” TNLA Col Ta Phone Kyaw said.

The TNLA, which is believed to have about 1,500 soldiers, have been engaged in regular clashes with the Burma Army in northern parts of Shan State in the past year. The TNLA has met for several rounds of ceasefire talks with the government, but no agreement was reached. According to the TNLA said clashes with the Burma Army were still continuing, adding that from 5-7 November deadly gun battles fighting occurred in Kutkai Township. Skirmishes recently also broke out in Namkham and Nansan townships. Ta Phone Kyaw said his troops were under sustained attacks as Burma Army units tried to conquer its Kutkai rebel base.²³

ANALYSIS

The holding of the EU-Myanmar Task Force meeting in Naypyitaw shows signs that relations between the two are entering an important phase after decades of non-engagement. The Task Force which aims to promote better relations between the two will allow Burma to learn more about democracy while on the other provide the EU the chance in shaping Burma’s political future including the elections in 2015. On a more wider scale, the EU’s presence in Burma could extend beyond its borders and in serving to promote its influence in South-East Asia region. While the Burmese leadership has vowed to bring democratic changes to the country, the path in achieving it remains a major challenge. Burma has been isolated for half a century and national reconciliation process remains fragile and unclear. Under such circumstances, it is important that Burma be allowed to develop its own democratic model based on its needs and more importantly be given time to make progress.

²² RCSS play wait-and-see on nationwide ceasefire decision – <http://english.dvb.no/news/the-restoration-council-of-the-shan-state-rcss-has-released-a-statement-saying-the-group-will-only-make-a-decision-on-the-signing-of-a-nationwide-ceasefire-agreement-after-it-sees-the-results-of-the-n/34402> (DVB) 14 November 2013

²³ TNLA rebels reject govt ceasefire proposal, clash with Burma Army – www.irrawaddy.org/burma/tarla-rebels-reject-govt-ceasefire-proposal-clash-burma-army.html (Irrawaddy) 13 November 2013

APPENDIX A: Press Release

Commissioner Piebalgs in Myanmar to reinforce development cooperation

European Commission - IP/13/1071

14/11/2013

European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs, has today announced the proposed main sectors for development cooperation with Myanmar from 2014 – 2020, during a visit to the country (13 - 15 November) to participate in the first EU-Myanmar Task Force.

These sectors will be rural development, education, governance and support to peace building. Although the bilateral assistance budget hasn't been formally approved by the European Parliament and the European Council, EU support could increase up to €90 million per year.

Commissioner Piebalgs said: "The development taking place in Myanmar is unprecedented and to needs to be acknowledged. But we must not forget about the challenges ahead, for which the EU, as one of the main donors, will stand by with further support to continue the necessary reforms in the country. This will be done in coordination with EU Member States and other donors, and in harmony with the government's own plans."

In addition to attending the Task Force Meeting, Commissioner Piebalgs is also chairing a Development Forum with the Myanmar Minister of Planning, Kan Zaw, with the presence of Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar opposition leader and democracy campaigner, and with civil society organisations and private sector representatives. The forum will provide an opportunity to discuss a coordinated response from the EU and Member States and to support the government's development plans over the next few years, as well as to review and debate the key development challenges facing Myanmar.

Commissioner Piebalgs is also taking part in the official launch of the SWITCH-SMART (SMEs for Environmental, Accountability, Responsibility and Transparency) programme. The project promotes and supports sustainable production of garments "made in Myanmar" striving to increase the international competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises in this sector. The 3-year project is funded with an EU grant of about €2 million and aims to reduce poverty through trade and private sector development in Myanmar.

The visit of the EU-Myanmar Task Force will be another good occasion to engage with Member States in a process with the objective of less fragmentation and, therefore, achieve a greater impact on the ground (known as Joint Programming). Through joint programming, the EU and its Member States jointly assess the priorities in each partner country to establish a common framework to implement their development programmes.

Background

The EU has provided development assistance to Myanmar since 1996, with over €300 million committed so far. Following the political opening of the country Commissioner Piebalgs announced a package of support of €150 million early last year for 2012 and 2013, all of which has already been committed. €100 million of this was committed in 2012 building upon existing support. Funds went to sectors such as health, education livelihoods, aid to uprooted people and civil society. Support to civil society will go towards monitoring of reform and transition, addressing discrimination (ethnic tensions) and domestic observation of the electoral cycle. The remaining €50 million were committed in 2013 to provide support to peace building, climate change and trade and private sector projects.

Achievements and results of current EU funded programmes

Education

The EU supports an education project (Quality Basic education Programme) to reach disadvantaged children and communities and to contribute to reducing disparity in both access and quality of education. It also focuses on basic education (early childhood education, primary education, non-formal education). The total budget of the programme is €66 million, with an EU contribution (2013-2015) of €22 million.

Some of the results so far include:

- Over 600,000 children attending more than 4,000 primary schools in the 25 townships benefited from the Child-Friendly School (CFS) approach;
- Over 900,000 children received essential learning packages to support their schooling;
- 230,000 children under five in disadvantaged and hard to reach areas attended Early Childhood Development (ECD) services;
- 28,500 teachers receiving training in child-centred approaches.

Civil Society

There is a very dynamic and diverse civil society in Myanmar that has significantly grown in the past few years. Since 2008 the EU has supported the civil society and other donors in Myanmar through programmes like The Non-State actor programme and Local Authorities (NSA/LA), The Instrument for stability (IfS), The Assistance to Uprooted People programme (AUP), etc.

Under NSA/LA, funding is provided to various initiatives countrywide and in a broad range of sectors, to enhance the ability of local and community based organisations and local authorities to contribute to poverty alleviation through the delivery of community-based services and small-scale development projects (in health, education, livelihoods, disaster risk reductions, environment), and focusing on marginalised groups.

The AUP programme provides support to internally displaced people (IDP) – especially in ethnic states. About €55 million has been allocated since 2004 to improve livelihoods and living conditions for IDPs, provide a degree of protection from forced repatriation or relocation and from other human rights abuses, and promote reconciliation and conflict resolution through community participation and constructive engagement. More than €26 million of on-going projects are implemented through NGOs.²⁴

For more information

Task Force Website: www.eu-myanmar-taskforce.com

Memo (AGRI): http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-975_en.htm

Memo (ENTR): http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-974_en.htm

Follow the event here: <http://storify.com/EEAS/eu-myanmar-task-force>

Website of the European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs:
http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/piebalgs/index_en.htm

Website of DG Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid – cooperation with the Myanmar (Burma):

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/myanmar/myanmar_en.htm

EU-Myanmar relations: <http://eeas.europa.eu/myanmar/>

²⁴ Commissioner Piebalgs in Myanmar to reinforce development cooperation (IP/13/1071)–
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1071_en.htm?locale=en (European Commission) 14 November 2013