

POLITICAL MONITOR NO.7

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN RECEIVES INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER AND PARTY

Burmese President Thein Sein received the visiting Indian parliamentary delegation led by LOK SABHA Speaker Honourable Smt. Meira Kumar on 13 February at the President's Office in Naypyitaw. The two sides focused discussions on the speedy implementation of the Kaladan Project, the completion of the India-Myanmar (Burma)-Thailand highway, repair works on the Moreh-Tamu-Kalay-Kalewa-Mandalay route and the re-emergence of Lido Road built in WWII that will be of benefit to India, Myanmar and China in trade. They also discussed effective cooperation for ensuring peace and stability in border region, further cooperation in ICT sector with the Ministry of Science and Technology and boosting cooperation between the two countries and cementing bilateral friendship. During the visit, the Indian parliamentary speaker also met with speaker of the House of Nationalities (Upper House) U Khin Aung Myint and Chairperson of the Lower House's Committee for Rule of Law and Tranquility Daw Aung San Suu Kyi exchanged views on experiences between the two parliaments, cooperation and developing a culture of democratic practices.¹

EU AMBASSADORS CALL ON PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKERS

French Ambassador to Myanmar (Burma) Mr Jacques VALADE and Ambassadors from EU countries called on the Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union parliament) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) U Khin Aung Myint and Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann on 8 February in Naypyitaw. During the meetings, discussion on Myanmar's political reforms, dissemination of knowledge on democracy system, poverty alleviation, power sharing to region/state governments, peacemaking process of Hluttaw Committees and EU's assistance to Myanmar (Burma) reform processes and cooperation between Burma and EU were discussed.²

PRESIDENT MEETS REGION/STATE NATIONAL RACES AFFAIRS MINISTERS

President U Thein Sein met Region/State National Races Affairs Ministers who attended the 66th Anniversary Union Day ceremony, at the meeting hall in Naypyitaw and in his speech called on those present and stressed that national unity is related with development, perpetuation of sovereignty and long-existence of the country and mere lip service alone could not achieve national unity. He continued and said that he would make engagements with the national races affairs ministers possible and that they could make direct contacts through Union Minister at the President Office U Hla Tun. President also added by saying the government's reform processes was to achieve peace and stability and socio-economic development of the people in Burma and expressed his hope that peace in Kachin State would come about due to the recent negotiations in Shweli and urged all

¹ Indian parliamentary goodwill delegation arrives in Yangon –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 February 2013 (p.16)/
President U Thein Sein receives Indian LOK SABHA Speaker and party –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 1)/
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker receives Indian parliamentary delegation –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 8)/
Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Indian parliamentary delegation –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 7)/
Pyithu Hluttaw's Rule of Law and Tranquility Committee Chairperson meets Indian parliamentary delegation –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 7)

² Pyidaungsu and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives French Ambassador and party –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 February 2013 (p.8)/
Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives ambassadors from EU member countries –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 February 2013 (p.9)

national races to understand the situation of the country and to work hand in hand with the government.³

PRESIDENT MEETS REPRESENTATIVES OF ARMED GROUPS

In a meeting with representatives of nine ethnic armed groups in Naypyitaw, President U Thein Sein said that round-table negotiation was the best way to achieving peace, and urged those involved in conflicts to adopt forgiveness, tolerance, sympathy and mutual respects. He also stated that peace aspired by the people could be realized when all stakeholders assumed responsibility leading to long lasting peace and priority should be placed on achieving and maintaining the Union spirit. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Karen National Union (KNU), the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), Shan State Progress Party/ Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), Karen National Liberation Army, Peace Council (KNU/ KNLA), Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Chin National Front (CNF), Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-K). Similarly, the Vice-Chairmen of Union level Peacemaking Committee Union Minister U Aung Min and U Thein Zaw also met the representatives of the nine ethnic armed groups and Vice-Chairman U Aung Min made clarifications on on-going peace-making process, prospects of making peace with KIO and follow-up programmes for holding political dialogue.⁴

BURMESE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF INVITES KIA TO PEACE TABLE

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice- Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has invited KIA to hold peace talks with the Tatmadaw. In his address to military officers at a gathering at the National Defence College (NDC), he said, *"If KIA wants really peace, they can come to the negotiation table any time."* The Tatmadaw has been making efforts to achieve peace with the armed groups on peace track, stressing the need for taking a remaining step that it (the Tatmadaw) to be taken to achieve the eternal peace with armed groups as the current achievement is the ceasefire and temporary peace with them, he said. Out of 11 armed groups, 10, except KIA, have already reached the Union level peace agreement with the government as the second step and that it is time for working together with armed groups with the framework of law and in accordance with the democratic principles as the country is on track to a democracy. He also called on those present to have far-sighted view in making efforts for bringing eternal peace and development to the country.⁵

UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ARRIVES IN BURMA

UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Burma Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana arrived on 10 February to begin his five-day visit to the country. During the visit, he called on Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw U Mya Nyein, Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa and Chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw Citizens' Fundamental Rights, Democracy and Human Rights Committee U Htay Oo at their offices in Naypyitaw. In his meeting with parliamentary officials discussions were focused on practicing democracy system in Burmese parliaments; promoting measures for human rights including participation of the defence services personnel representatives in the Hluttaws; amendments of legislature and law; national unity, peace and stability and

³ Relations between national races, sympathy, mutual understandings of difficulties, valuing tradition and customs could cement national unity –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 February 2013 (p.8 & 9)

⁴ All stakeholders have to assume responsibility for ensuring long-term benefit by translating the temporary peace into a lasting peace –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 16 & 10)/
Union level Peace-making Committee Vice-Chairmen meet responsible persons of Peace Groups –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 7)

⁵ C-in-C invites KIA to peace table –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 10)

international relations. During his visit, Mr Quintana also visited Rakhine State and visited relief camps in Pauktaw, Mingan and Thetkalpyin and also met prisoners at Sittway prison and also met opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁶

LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER VISITS KACHIN STATE

The Speaker of the Lower House Thura Shwe Mann accompanied by officials concerned visited refugee camps in Kachin State and met with internally displaced people in the Myitkyina area to discuss their situation. The Lower House speaker also travelled to Putao and Mohnyin townships and met Kachin State government officials and locals and called for mass participation in carrying out the tasks for peace and stability and development of the region. He also stressed the importance of tolerance, understanding, diligence and courage in ensuring peace and called on the people to participate in the peace making process.⁷

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw) Sessions

The 6th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held its 7th day meeting on 9th February. During the session the following key issues were discussed and approved:

- **The Union Minister for Finance and Revenue U Win Shein reported on ODA Loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency-JICA. According to his report, JICA will grant aid package worth about 66 billion Yen (US\$ 704.28 million). The aid package include 17 billion Yen for infrastructure projects to help poverty alleviation in states and regions, 20 billion Yen for the first step of the development of infrastructure for the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, 29 billion Yen for infrastructures for power supply in Yangon and for up-grading Kyangin Cement Plant. The session approved the ODA loan as it should be used in the development of the country;**
- **U Win Than of Thabaung constituency (USDP) urged Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to reconsider the forming of investigation commission for “Above the Law” article written by Dr Seik Hpwa, criticizing Hluttaw. U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun Constituency (NDF) seconded the forming of the investigation commission, urging to take actions against the writer who criticized the Hluttaw which is constituted with the representatives of the people. In his clarification, he also urged the media to use polite usage and to have positive attitude when they criticized the Hluttaw. He also urged the media to understand the two roles: Hluttaw and representatives**

⁶ Mr Quintana arrives Yangon –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-11.pdf> (NLM) 11 February 2013 (p. 9)/

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker receives Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/152newsn.pdf> (NLM) 15 February 2013 (p. 9)/

Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw receives Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/152newsn.pdf> (NLM) 15 February 2013 (p. 9)/

Chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw Citizens’ Fundamental Rights, Democracy and Human Rights meets Mr Quintana –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/152newsn.pdf> (NLM) 15 February 2013 (p. 9)/

Quintana Visits relief camps In Sittway District –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 February 2013 (p. 9)/

Myanmar's rapid reform a good sign of improvement in human rights situation: UN envoy –

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-02/17/c_124351239.htm (Xinhua News) 17 February 2013

⁷ Far-sighted view is an essential prerequisite for perpetuation and prosperity of the Union: Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-12.pdf> (NLM) 12 February 2013 (p. 16 & 7)/

Clash and conflict will not make any progress for regional development: Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-11.pdf> (NLM) 11 February 2013 (p. 1 & 8)

when they pointed out wrong and mistakes and when they expressed the diverse opinions in the democratic system. The investigation commission is constituted with 17 members.⁸

The 6th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held its 8th day meeting on 13th February. Key issues raised and approved at the session included the following:

- **Discussions were focused on 2013-2014 FY National Planning Bill;**
- U Mahn Maung Maung Nyan of Pantanaw Constituency (NUP) called for redefining the role of cooperatives as a tool to fight poverty, expressing his concern for its perceived failure;
- The session approved the appointment of **General Myat Hein to the post of Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology** and **Lt-Gen Thet Naing Win to the post of Union Minister for Border Affairs as nominated by the President;**
- U Khun Thein Pe of Hopong Constituency (PNO) stated that, the **“2013-2014 FY national planning bill was satisfactory, however the ethnic people needed more assistance to achieve a more inclusive and equitable development.”**⁹

The 6th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held its 9th day meeting on 14th February. Key discussions on **2013-2014 FY National Planning Bill** were raised and debated at the session;

- Daw Mi Myint Than of Ye Constituency (AMRDP) stated that **“Laws should not be just mere words and called for translation of the government’s doctrine “good governance, clean government” into actions. She stressed agricultural loans should be reached to farmers and not into the pockets of those who misuse power and suggested adding the word “the sufficient amount of” between “to provide” and “agricultural loans to farmers” in the proposed agricultural plan on 2013-2014 FY Bill;**
- Daw Nan Wah Nu of Kunhing Constituency (SNDP) questioned the credibility of commitment made in parliament, criticizing the Electric Power Ministry for failing to build a power station in Kunhing Township which was promised to establish nearly two years ago;
- Daw Dwe Bu of Ingyanyan Constituency (UDPKS) called for pragmatism in policy-making, stressing the need for operability on the ground. She welcomed the Information Ministry’s plan to extend parliamentary news and ethnic communities TV channels, suggesting establishing FM stations in rural areas so that people are in touch with functions of the parliament;
- U Than Myint of Taninthayi Region Constituency No (10)(USDP) warned against the apparent planned economy of the State, calling for granting greater autonomy to regions and states. MPs urged the Union government to consider pay rise for public servants;
- **Taking of oath by U Myat Hein, Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology; Lt-Gen Thet Naing Win, for Border Affairs and U Hsan Hsint for Religious Affairs** was presided in the presence of the Speaker of the House during the session.¹⁰

MONYWA MINE INVESTIGATION COMMISSION HOLDS MEETING

The Monywa Mine Investigation Commission issued a Press Release in which it stated that members of the Commission conducted visits on 24-25 January and 6-7 February respectively and met the monks and civilians including children receiving medical treatment. In its statement, the Commission

⁸ President proposes to replace post of Union Minister for Border Affairs with Lt-Gen Thet Naing Win, to assign Gen Myat Hein to Union Minister for Communications & Information Technology. JICA to grant 66 billion Yen ODA to Myanmar – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 February 2013 (p. 1)

⁹ Role of cooperatives, tool to fight poverty – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 February 2013 (p. 16)

¹⁰ Heated debate on 2013-2014 FY National Plan Bill goes on – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newspaper/152newsn.pdf> (NLM) 15 February 2013 (p. 1)

stated that a provisional report had been submitted on 19 January 2013, and that detailed information would be disclosed in its final report upon its completion. (*Please see Appendix A for full statement of the Press Release*).¹¹

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT, ETHNIC ALLIANCE TO HOLD TALKS

The Burmese government and an ethnic alliance will hold talks in Thailand this month, according to the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC). The United Nationalities Federal Council –UNFC, a coalition of ethnic groups, agreed last Thursday to have the talks in Thailand’s northern province of Chiang Mai. The meeting is scheduled to be held after 16 February and will work in establishing a dialogue framework. Dr Min Zaw Oo, Director of the MPC said, "Some groups want to hold a dialogue individually while some want it with the whole federation, but some groups prefer subject-wise talks," he said. "So we are trying to develop a framework to ensure all-inclusive talks. We accept any kind of talks. In our ongoing peace efforts, we cannot sideline any ethnic armed groups," he added. The MPC is a government body funded by the European Union to serve as a platform for dialogues between all parties involved in Burma’s peace process.¹²

BURMA’S HUMAN RIGHTS WATCHDOG TO DISSEMINATE HR DOCUMENTS

Human rights documents will be translated to Burmese (Myanmar) language and disseminated among the public according to Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The commission, which is an independent body formed by President Thein Sein in September 2011, will start the task of translation of 9 Conventions on the topic human rights by the United Nations (UN), Sit Myaing, Secretary of NHRC, said. "There are 9 Core Conventions by the UN, and our nation has adopted there of them: Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). We will translate those nine conventions into Myanmar and disseminate them among the people," he said. Despite analysts’ doubt on the commission’s will and ability to challenge the government, the 15-member body NHRC, which consists of retired officials and academics, supported last year the public call for release of political prisoners and involved in investigation on the complaints of human rights violations. Meanwhile, Swedish Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law has offered to assist the Commission in educating Myanmar people about the human rights.¹³

KNU LEADER: 2008 CONSTITUTION DOES NOT BENEFIT ETHNIC PEOPLE

Karen National Union (KNU) General Secretary, Padoh Kwe Htoo, recently said in an interview that the KNU remains committed to peace, but warns Burma’s government to enact further reforms. He added that the KNU’s policy is unchanged, despite ceasefire negotiations with the Burmese Army and that unity was important for the Karen people at this crucial time. The KNU has been involved in an armed struggle with the government for more than 60 years, moving forward to building lasting peace but concerned that the government will use peace talks as a means to gaining control of mega development projects in Karen State. He urged that such regional projects should benefit local people and encouraged the promotion and participation of women in the on-going political process.

¹¹ Investigation Commission: Press Release No. 3/2013 –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 February 2013 (p.1)

¹² Myanmar government, ethnic federation to hold talks –
<http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/2418-myanmar-government-ethnic-federation-to-hold-talks> (Eleven News Media)
10 February 2013

¹³ Human rights documents to be translated to Myanmar: NHRC –
<http://elevenmyanmar.com/national/2392-human-rights-documents-to-be-translated-to-myanmar-nhrc> (Eleven News Media) 9 February 2013

Kwe Htoo also stated that the problems in Burma not only affect the Karen people but cooperation with other ethnic groups and other democratic institutions was crucial and the KNU would look for peace through political discussions and negotiations, and not on the battlefield.

Padoh Kwe Htoo concluded by stating that, though Burma had made significant reforms since 2011, it was still heavily influenced by the Burma Army – which experts say still has the final say in the country's politics, using the 2008 constitution as an example of this. "The government plans to hold a national election in 2015. The KNU is an armed resistance organization. We don't agree with the 2008 Constitution because it has no guarantees for ethnic people, and gives no guarantee for democracy, peoples' rights - the military still has overall power in Burma. If we cannot amend the constitution, then there is no guarantee for our people's ethnic or political rights. I believe that it not possible for the KNU to be registered as a [political] party and to contest the [2015] election."¹⁴

ANALYSIS

The meeting held between the government and the KIO on 4 February in Shweli, for the moment has brought a reprieve in fighting between the two sides, though any form of a permanent ceasefire still remains elusive. However, the President's meeting with representatives from ethnic armed groups who attended the Union Day celebrations in Naypyitaw could become a basis on which to promote and build trust in achieving peace. The Burmese Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing's invitation extended to the KIO to sit down for peace talks is both timely and welcome. Under the circumstances, it is in the interest of both the government and the KIO to continue talks based on the Shweli meeting to find common ground.

¹⁴ KNU leader: 2008 Constitution does not benefit ethnic people – <http://karennews.org/2013/02/knu-leader-2008-constitution-does-not-benefit-ethnic-people.html/> (Karen News) 11 February 2013

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

INVESTIGATION COMMISSION PRESS RELEASE NO. 3/2013

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Investigation Commission

Press Release No. 3/2013

14th Waning of Pyatho, 1374 ME

(9th February, 2013)

1. Investigation Commission held its 5th plenary meeting at Hall (I-12) in the compound of Hluttaw at 13:30 hr on 8 February, 2013. The meeting focused on compilation of final report. The commission members held discussions on fundamental principles to be followed in drawing up the final report which is presented by the commission chairman.
2. The members who had made field trips on 24-25 January with duty assignment of the commission chairman, presented their findings on health conditions of six monks who are receiving medical treatments in Sitagu Hospital in Sagaing Township, Sagaing District in Sagaing Region and four children from Kanganon Village, Salingyi Township, Monywa District, who returned to their village after receiving medical treatments in Yangon Children Hospital, to the commission.
3. In addition, health conditions of the injured monks in Sitagu Hospital and the woman who got injured in the collapse of brick tank, at Monywa Hospital, were presented by the commission members after making field trips on 6-7 February. Three of those six injured monks were discharged from the Hospital on 8 February.
4. The commission was formed with the President Office's announcement No.95/2012. Deadline for submitting the provisional report is set by the end of January. On 19 January, 2013, the commission submitted the provisional report to the President. According to the commission's announcement No.2/2013 appeared in the daily newspapers on 19 January, 2013, it is stated that it is the provisional report only, not for release. Details will be publicized only when the final report is released.

**Investigation Commission
9th February, 2013¹⁵**

¹⁵ Investigation Commission: Press Release No. 3/2013 –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-02-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 February 2013 (p.1)