
POLITICAL MONITOR No. 22

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN RECEIVES CHINESE LEADER

President Thein Sein received a delegation led by Chairman of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Minister of International Department, Central Committee of Communist Party (IDCPC) Wang Jiarui in Naypyitaw on 12 September. The two leaders touched on the implementation Myanmar's going peace-making process, undertakings in rural development and poverty alleviation, and cooperation in drugs eradication and the further strengthening of bilateral ties. Chairman Wang Jiarui also met Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and discussed the promotion of relations between China and Myanmar.¹

UNDP AND FINLAND SUPPORT DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN MYANMAR

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Finland signed an agreement for 2 million Euros (USD \$ 2.6 million) for the UNDP's work on strengthening democratic governance in Myanmar. The UNDP works with the government, parliament, judiciary and civil society to promote democratic governance, the rule of law, and the advancement of human rights in order to support the country's reforms and strengthen foundations for inclusive growth and sustainable development in Myanmar.

The Finnish funds will contribute to the achievement of Myanmar's priorities of: improving planning and statistical capacities; enhancing legislative processes; supporting rule of law and access to fair justice; and civil service to become more accountable and responsive to the needs of the people.

In line with best practices of international development assistance, the funding is provided on programme basis, i.e. not earmarked towards specific activities or projects, thus enabling strategic and flexible leveraging in funds in support of larger reform objectives, as well as reducing transaction costs for development actors involved.

Finnish Charge d'Affaires Jarmo Kuuttilla said that "Finland is committed to supporting the process of transformation in Myanmar, of which the promotion of good governance and respect for human rights is a critical part. We are confident that UNDP's work with the government, the parliament and the judiciary, as well as civil society, can positively contribute to that process." The UNDP's democratic governance work in Myanmar is also financially supported by Australia, Denmark and Japan.²

YOUTH INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN PEACE PROCESS

In his address at the Youths and Peace Forum held in Mawlamyine on 14 September, Union Minister at the President's Office Aung Min highlighted the importance of an all-inclusiveness of stakeholders in the on-going peace process being implemented by the government and stated that the political dialogue is likely to be held before the end of 2014. He also pointed out the important roles played by civil society organizations and youth in the peace process and urged them to lay down an effective procedure for peace. Chief Minister of Mon State Ohn Myint also invited the youths to join

¹ Myanmar, China focus on cooperation in drugs eradication – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 September 2014 (p. 1) / Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets Chinese guests – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 September 2014 (p. 3)

² Partnership between UNDP and Finland supports Democratic Governance in Myanmar – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-14-red.pdf> (NLM) 14 September 2014 (p. 9)

hands with the government in the on-going democratic reforms and peace process but also in tackling anti-drug and anti-human trafficking endeavours.³

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) sessions

The 11th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 2nd day meeting on 12 September and focussed on foreign loans and the resettlement of Myanmar migrant workers and refugees in Thailand.

- The Deputy Ministers for Health, Transport, Livestock, Fishery and Rural Development briefed the session on **plans to implement the Essential Health Services Access Project, the Ayeyawady Valley management project, infrastructure projects in rural areas and production and purchase railway carriages using foreign loans from World Bank, and Italian Development Cooperation and Korean Economic Development Cooperation Funds.**
- **Concerning Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand, Deputy Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security Htin Aung told the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw that measures will be taken to provide jobs for these workers in accordance with their skills when they come back to Myanmar. He also noted that Thilawa Special Economic Zone and Dawei Special Economic Zone will also create many jobs.**
- Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Tin Oo Lwin said that **a total of 130,000 Myanmar refugees from 9 refugee camps in Thailand will be sent back to Myanmar in 3 groups over an estimated period of one year in the near future. He added that the ministry will handle the issue in cooperation with other ministries in accordance with the guidance of the union government and diplomatic negotiations with the government of Thailand.**⁴

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

KAREN OFFICER KILLED IN DRUNKEN SHOOTOUT

A member of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) was killed in what is believed to have been an alcohol-related shootout with government security forces in the border town of Myawaddy on 19 September. Locals said that DKBA lieutenant, Linn Naing, was drunk and driving his vehicle into parked cars in Myawaddy. Karen National Union (KNU) Liaison Officer for Myawaddy Saw Zorrow said the troops blocked the road ahead of Linn Naing and ordered him to get out of the vehicle. The rebel soldier opted instead to pull out a gun, at which point the troops opened fire. Linn Naing was shot and seriously injured, but died two hours later in Myawaddy Hospital. An unidentified passenger was also shot and is being treated at the hospital. Tun Tun, a senior official in the DKBA, confirmed that the group is aware of the incident and plans to conduct an investigation. He added that "We are aware that the incident took place, one of our men was killed and another was injured and we will look into the matter and discuss it with the authorities accordingly."

The Burmese army allegedly issued an order on 14 September for several of the state's smaller ethnic armed organizations to refrain from wearing uniforms or carrying firearms into the town. News of the order followed an incident where one armed group of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council temporarily blocked 30 trucks that were attempting to transport Thai goods across the border in a show of force meant to draw the attention of Thai authorities. The group has accused Thai border authorities of mistreating and extorting Burmese migrant workers, citing the daily bribes that migrants crossing the border to work in Mae Sot are forced to pay as an example. The KNU/KNLA-Peace Council have threatened to stage another blockade if they are not granted a requested

³ Youths invited to participate in peace process –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 September 2014 (p. 3)

⁴ Resettlement of Myanmar migrant workers, refugees, and foreign loans discussed at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 September 2014 (p. 3)

tripartite meeting with the Burmese and Thai governments to address migrant workers' mistreatment. Similarly, two small explosives were found in Myawaddy in recent weeks but no one has yet been accused or claimed responsibility for the bombs.⁵

POLITICAL PARTIES GEAR UP FOR POST-CEASEFIRE DIALOGUE

Representatives of 56 political parties met in Yangon from 13 to 14 September to discuss the framework for forthcoming political dialogue between Burma's ethnic armed organisations and the central government. The ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) were notably absent - In all, 63 parties had been invited to participate. Politicians are currently preparing for their participation in tripartite dialogue that will begin within 90 days of reaching a nationwide ceasefire agreement, which negotiators now say will happen by the end of 2014. "The role of political parties will be important in tripartite dialogue," said Sai Hla Kyaw, spokesperson for ethnic political alliance Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF). "We want to have a framework agreed upon by all stakeholders. So far, both sides (ethnic and government negotiators) have established their frameworks, only we haven't finished preparations. Today we will hear the views of political leaders on peace in Burma." National Democratic Force (NDF) Chairman Khin Maung Swe said that the attendees will try to reach a consensus even though not all parties were present. "We can't say that this meeting is representative of all parties, as some delegates could not attend because they were not in Rangoon. Some sent in their views via email, others deliberately didn't attend the meeting. We can't speak for those who didn't want to join. That's up to them." The government's negotiating team, the Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPWC), invited 34 party representatives and members of the ethnic peace committee, Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), to meet on 18 August to discuss proposed frameworks. The discussions, reportedly meant to brief politicians on the peace process, followed complaints by some parties that they were being excluded from the negotiations.⁶

BURMESE POLICE SEEKS INTELLIGENCE ON AL-QAEDA FROM INTERPOL

The Myanmar Police Force (MPF) has sought information from Interpol about the international terrorist group al-Qaeda following its recent threat to launch attacks in South Asia and Burma. According to Police Colonel Aung Htay Myint the Burmese authorities asked for information from Interpol regarding al-Qaeda's plans to launch terrorist operations in Burma, following a video statement broadcast on 3 September in which al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri said the terrorist organisation planned to "wage jihad" in India, Bangladesh and Burma. Police Colonel Oakkar Ko of the Aviation Police Department spoke to local media on 16 September and assured the public that enough security personnel were on duty to monitor increased passenger traffic at the nation's airports. Security checks on departing passengers were noticeably tightened at Yangon International Airport some weeks ago, before al-Zawahiri issued the threat.⁷

⁵ Mayhem in Myawaddy as Karen rebel dies in drunken shootout – <http://english.dvb.no/news/mayhem-in-myawaddy-rebel-dies-shootout-burma-myanmar/44291> (DVB) 19 September 2014 /

Tensions Rise as Military Orders Rebels to Disarm in Myawaddy – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/?p=68687> (Irrawaddy) 17 September 2014

⁶ Political parties gear up for post-ceasefire dialogue – <http://www.dvb.no/news/political-parties-gear-up-for-post-ceasefire-dialogue-burma-myanmar/44165> (DVB) 15 September 2014 / NLD 'not invited' to political conference – <http://english.dvb.no/news/nld-not-invited-to-political-conference-burma-myanmar/44199> (Irrawaddy) 16 September 2014

⁷ Myanmar Police Force seeks intelligence on al-Qaeda from Interpol – <http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/myanmar/item/12855-myanmar-police-seeks-intelligence-on-al-qaeda-from-interpol> (Mizzima) 17 September 2014

ANALYSIS

At a time when trust between the government and ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) is still lacking and confidence building measures are still being established, the killing of the DKBA lieutenant in Myawaddy will not have contributed positively towards the national reconciliation process. While the incident may be small, the impact and repercussions if not properly handled immediately could lead to further tensions between government forces and EAOs.

The call made by the government's chief peace negotiator Minister Aung Min for civil society and youth groups to participate in the peace process is indeed encouraging. For such kind of initiatives to become a reality, all sides involved in the peace talks will need to show their willingness and acceptance to engage all stakeholders. This once again highlights that an all-inclusive participatory process is a key to a successful peace process. Whether the government or the EAOs share such sentiments remains to be seen.