

## POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 26

### OFFICIAL MEDIA

#### **CANADIAN MINISTER FOR TRADE MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT**

During his visit to Burma from 1-3 September, Canadian International Trade Minister Edward Fast met several high-ranking officials including President Thein Sein and Transport Minister U Nyan Tun Aung, opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as the Chairman of the Business Council U Win Aung and announced plans to open the Canadian Embassy in the near future. The President thanked the Canadian government for easing economic sanctions and emphasized that the visit would help to further strengthen and promote cooperation between Burma and Canada. Minister Fast requested the recognition of Canada as a trustworthy partner of the Burmese people and the economic sanctions were lifted as recognition of the changes taking place in the country. He also requested visas-on-arrival for Canadian citizens to allow those who wanted to invest in Burma. Minister Fast is the first Canadian government minister to visit Burma since Canada announced significant easing of its trade sanctions, and the first Canadian trade minister ever to visit Burma.<sup>1</sup>

#### **US-ASEAN EMINENT PERSONS GROUP MEETS WITH PRESIDENT**

President Thein Sein received US Permanent Representative to ASEAN Ambassador David L. Carden and the US-ASEAN Eminent Persons Group<sup>2</sup>. The President said that Burma would be able to promote ASEAN-US ties during its assumption as coordinator of ASEAN-US from 2012 to 2015, and that the US would be able to maintain contacts with the government in Naypyidaw regularly. The group praised the bold and far-sighted initiatives of the President and the government for more transparency and that Burma could take a crucial role in a more compact and stronger future of the ASEAN community, and that the US is committed to work together in the process Burma has initiated. They added that the American Coca Cola Company has projected to invest 100 million USD over the coming three years, creating jobs for nearly 2,000 Burmese citizens. It is the first US company to invest in Burma and others would soon follow. The President's forthcoming visit to the US is much anticipated, and he is scheduled to meet the US-ASEAN Economic Council. They added that the US fully supports the unity of ASEAN and hope that Burma would play an active major role in ASEAN-US relations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Under new political system foreign policy of Myanmar establishes amicable relations with every nation whether from East or West. (President U Thein Sein) / Canada worth recognition as a trustworthy partner from Myanmar people (Canadian Minister Mr Edward Fast) –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 September 2012 (p. 1) /

Union Transport Minister receives Canadian minister –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 September 2012 (p. 9) /

Minister Fast Meets with Aung San Suu Kyi -

[http://www.international.gc.ca/media\\_commerce/release\\_photo\\_distribution/2012/09/03a.aspx?lang=eng&view=d](http://www.international.gc.ca/media_commerce/release_photo_distribution/2012/09/03a.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)

(Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Canada) 3 September 2012 /

Minister Fast Meets with Burmese Business Leaders –

[http://www.international.gc.ca/media\\_commerce/release\\_photo\\_distribution/2012/09/01a.aspx?lang=eng&view=d](http://www.international.gc.ca/media_commerce/release_photo_distribution/2012/09/01a.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)

(Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Canada) 1 September 2012

<sup>2</sup> The U.S. – ASEAN Eminent Persons Group was created in November 2011 and includes Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky (a former U.S. Trade Representative), Muhtar Kent (Chairman and CEO of the Coca-Cola Company) and Ambassador J. Stapleton Roy (former U.S. Ambassador to Singapore, China and Indonesia). They will formulate a report containing recommendations on enhanced U.S.-ASEAN engagement for consideration by President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and ASEAN Leaders.

Fact Sheet: U.S. Institutional Support for ASEAN –

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/09/197278.htm> (US State Department) 3 September 2012

<sup>3</sup> Myanmar to serve as coordinator in ASEAN-US relations from 2012-2015 –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 September 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

### **FOREIGN MINISTER ATTENDS 16<sup>TH</sup> NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM) SUMMIT**

Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin attended the 16<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Tehran, Iran from 26 -31 August 2012, which was also attended by representatives from 87 member countries, 15 observer countries and organizations and 14 guest countries and organizations. In his statement at the Plenary Session, he updated the Summit on the progress achieved of the democratic transition and also gave the latest situation concerning the communal violence in Rakhine State. The FM said his Government would continue to monitor the situation and guarantee freedom of religion and the rights of all its citizens without discrimination against their race or creed in accordance to the law. He added that as a founding member of the NAM, Burma will continue to work hand-in-hand with other members in achieving, peace, prosperity, justice, equality and development as envisaged by the founders of the Movement. On the sidelines, the FM held separate meetings and exchanged views on promotion and strengthening of bilateral relations with Ministers from Iran, Korea, Indonesia, Australia, Bhutan, Malaysia, Kazhakstan, Mongolia and Cambodia. The Summit adopted the Final Document, Tehran Declaration, Tehran Plan of Action of the Non-Aligned Movement, Solidarity Declaration on Palestine and Declaration on Palestine Political Prisoners.<sup>4</sup>

### **SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT**

South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana- Mashabane visited Burma on 4 September and met President U Thein Sein and several other senior members of the government. It is the first high-level by a South African Minister since diplomatic ties were established between the two countries in 1995. The Minister conveyed a message from South African President Zuma for closer political, economic and social ties, that South Africa has the absolute political will to open an embassy at an opportune time, and she also added that she is heartened by the success of democratization being implemented in Burma. President U Thein Sein said that both Burma and South Africa have an independent and active common foreign policy and adhere to the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence with all countries of the world. He requested South Africa to urge other countries to lift economic sanctions imposed on Burma at an opportune time. Regarding the recent unrests in Rakhine State, the President said that false messages and statements had been transmitted and coverage of the incident by some countries was mere propaganda. He deemed the attempts to bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Committee as unnecessary as the government has kept the situation under control in the region. Minister Maite also met Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin to discuss bilateral ties and cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

### **FRENCH SENATE SOUTH-ASIA COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT**

The Chair of the French Senate's South-Asia Committee Senator Gerard Midquel met President U Thein Sein on 5 September. Senator Midquel said his delegation's visit had two aims: 1) to study Burma's current political and economic conditions and 2) to promote cooperation, especially in the parliamentary affairs by sharing experiences. He also praised the efforts of the Burmese government for its reform process, democratization and human rights, and releasing of political prisoners as well as signing peace agreements with ethnic armed groups. The President reiterated his government's foreign policy as independent, active and non-aligned and stated that political stability and flourishing of democracy are the keys to Burma's development. He also requested the Senator to urge the French government for removal of all economic sanctions as it was hindering the economic development. Senator Midquel also met with Parliament Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and discussed cooperation in parliamentary affairs.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Union Minister for Foreign Affairs attends 16th Summit of Non-Aligned Movement – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 September 2012 (p. 2)

<sup>5</sup> South African minister's first-ever visit to Myanmar, sign for close ties and cooperation in the future (President U Thein Sein)– <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 September 2012 (p. 1 & 8) / Myanmar, South Africa to promote bilateral ties, cooperation – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 September 2012 (p. 2)

<sup>6</sup> Flourishing of democracy system needs to have socio-economic development of the people (President Thein Sein) – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 September 2012 (p. 1 & 8) /

## CHINESE ARMY DEPUTY CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT

Vice-President U Nyan Tun received the Chinese Deputy Chief of General Staff General Ma Xiaotian of People's Liberation Army on 6 September in Naypyitaw. They discussed matters relating to promoting and further strengthening of ties between the two countries. The General also held separate meetings with Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Vice-Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) General Soe Win. Their discussions focused on cooperation in control of border regions, continuous cooperation in security in international sector, stability of border regions, prevalence of law and order in Burma and China at the Mekong Basin as well as political, economic and social matters.<sup>7</sup>

## HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

### Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The key issues during the 37<sup>th</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> day sessions (31 August – 6 September) of the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) included:

- U Thein Tun Oo of Amarapura Constituency (USDP) submitted a proposal urging the Lower House committees to record the laws related to their functions, and by-laws, rules and regulations, orders, instructions and procedures and that the Union level agencies which manage the relevant laws to cooperate and assist accordingly. (37<sup>th</sup> day session)<sup>8</sup>
- 9 MPs discussed the proposal submitted by U Than Nwe of Butalin Constituency (USDP) calling for emphasis to be placed on conservation of natural forests in the country, and for the stability of natural environments, restoring eco-system and long-term extraction of forests and forest products. (38<sup>th</sup> day session)<sup>9</sup>
- U Kun Lein of Falam Constituency (Chin Progressive Party) raised a question and asked if there is any plan to teach local language (ethnic language) during school hours and if there is any plan to teach national race language together with English at primary level. (39<sup>th</sup> day session)  
Deputy Minister for Education U Aye Kyu replied that arrangements are being made to teach local national race language for pre-primary level outside school hours in respective regions, though there is no plan to teach combined curriculum of national race language and English considering the perpetuation of the Union.<sup>10</sup>

- U Hla Tun of Hkamti Constituency (USDP) asked about the undertakings of the Pyithu Hluttaw Investigation Committee on the impeachment of the Chairman and members of the Constitutional Tribunal formed in accordance with Sections 71 and 302 of the Constitution. (39<sup>th</sup> session)

Pyithu Hluttaw investigation committee member U Win Myint responded:

- The duties and authorities of the committee have been defined in Pyithu Hluttaw directive No. 1/2012 on 29 August.
- The Chairman and members of the Constitutional Tribunal failed to attend a hearing on 3 September.

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Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw receives Chairman of South-Asia Committee of French Senate – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 September 2012 (p. 8)

<sup>7</sup> Vice-President U Nyan Tun receives a delegation led by Deputy Chief of General Staff of PLA of China – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 September 2012 (p. 16)/

Vice-Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Deputy Chief of General Staff of PLA – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 September 2012 (p. 2)/  
General Soe Win, General Ma Xiaotian focus on cooperation between Myanmar, Chinese armed forces – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 September 2012 (p. 7)

<sup>8</sup> Applying of writs against decisions of Union level organizations contrary to constitution – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 September 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

<sup>9</sup> Road safety measures would be achieved only when there is cooperation between responsible departments, organizations and people – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 September 2012 (p. 16 & 8)

<sup>10</sup> Union level crossword still unresolved – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 September 2012 (p. 16 & 6)

- The accused (Constitutional Tribunal) requested the Pyithu Hluttaw to suspend the investigation as it has sent a writ to the Union Supreme Court remonstrating the investigation committee chairman and members. As it failed to present a strong reasoning, the request for suspension was rejected, but Chairman-then U Nanda Kyaw Swa was replaced by U Thein Swe showing mercy on the accused.
- The defendants again failed to attend a hearing on 4 September a- gesture of contempt towards the Pyithu Hluttaw, all its representatives and the investigation committee.
- If they again fail to attend the hearing on 5 September, the investigation shall be deemed complete under the above directive, except for some procedures of investigation.
- The report on findings will be submitted to the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker for seeking decision of the Pyithu Hluttaw.<sup>11</sup>
- Concerning the **impeachment of the Constitutional Tribunal**, investigation committee members U Ngon Maung and U Win Myint read out the board's report, while U Than Myint from Salingyi Constituency presented the committee's findings for impeaching the chairman and members of the Constitutional Tribunal. (40<sup>th</sup> session)
  - The Hluttaw voted to decide investigation board's comments, and more than two-thirds of representatives **agreed to impeach the chairman and members of the Constitutional Tribunal** of the Union under the section 334, sub-section (a), paragraph (2) and (5) and to sent it to Pyithu Hluttaw to take necessary actions after decision has been made by Amyotha Hluttaw.
  - A total of 408 of 429 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives— including 101 Defence Service Personal representatives and 307 people's representatives including the Speaker took part and attended the session.
  - Due to the two Hluttaws' impeachments, for breaching the provisions of Section 334, Sub-section (a) and paragraph (2) of the Constitution and for lacking of capability to discharge their duties vested in line with section 334, sub-section (a) and paragraph (5) of the constitution, Chairman of U Thein Soe, and members Dr Tin Aung Aye, Daw Khin Hla Myint, U Soe Thein, U Tun Kyi, U Khin Tun, U Myint Kyaing, Daw Mi Mi Yi and U Hsan Myint should not continue to discharge their duties.<sup>12</sup>

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

The key issues during the 37<sup>th</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> day sessions (31 August – 6 September) of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) included:

- U Ohn Tin of Rakhine State Constituency No.10 (RNDP) submitted a proposal urging the Union government to supervise and control the fishing of offshore fishing ships in onshore fishing areas in the Burmese coastal regions. The Hluttaw decided that the proposal would be discussed at a later date. (37<sup>th</sup> day session)<sup>13</sup>
- U Khat Htein Nan of Kachin State constituency No.1 (UDPKS) asked a question regarding the developments regarding cease-fires and peace talks. (40<sup>th</sup> day session)

The Deputy Minister for Defense Commodore Aung Thaw responded:

- 3 state-level, 3 union-level, and 4 informal discussions had taken place since 2011 when fighting between Tatmadaw and KIA has started.
- On 10 December 2011, the President gave instructions to avoid fighting and attacking KIA camps in Kachin State, except protection.
- The Commander-in-Chief immediately passed the President's instructions to units under his control, and the respective regiments and units are following the instructions.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> No representative has so far claimed the Union minister level rights and emoluments – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 September 2012 (p. 16, 7 & 8)

<sup>13</sup> Factory equipped with international standard safety system against smokes, sewage and other wastes – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 September 2012 (p. 16)

- There have been 926 incidents of fighting between Tatmadaw and KIA.
- As peace-making with the KNU has mutual trusts and honesty, there are no conflicts and there is regional peace and stability.
- Peace contracts could be signed with ten remaining armed groups through ceasefire.
- The KIA has constantly demanded that the only way forward in achieving peace is by holding discussions through political means. As with the other armed groups, the KIA may sign peace agreements if they follow international and generally accepted peace processes.<sup>14</sup>

### **Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw) Session**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw) held its 12<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 4 September.

The Speakers announced the messages sent by the President on 29 August on the appointments, resignations and reassignments of cabinet ministers and deputy ministers, and the Hluttaw confirmed the reshuffle of 36 Union government ministries with the majority vote. The reshuffle included the appointment of Lt-Gen Wai Lwin as Minister of Defence, U Thein Htaik as Union Auditor-General, the reformation of the Ministry of Electric Power and the dissolution of the Ministry of Industrial Development.<sup>15</sup>

## **UNOFFICIAL MEDIA**

### **KNU AND GOVERNMENT DISCUSS CEASEFIRE CODE OF CONDUCT**

After holding its 3<sup>rd</sup> round of peace-talks with the government in Hpa-an on 4 September, the Karen National Union (KNU) announced that the talks were a success and that the two sides would meet again later in 2012. KNU Spokesperson Naw May Oo said that it was important for Karen civilians to know about the results of the peace-talks and that further statements would be issued regarding future negotiations. The KNU statement reported that both sides discussed in detail a 'cease-fire code of conduct', issues related to the security of the civilians, organizing local cease-fire monitoring teams and the relocations of Burmese army outposts in KNU territory. It acknowledged that the two sides were unable to reach a final agreement on the ceasefire 'code of conduct' but agreed to discuss it at the next round of talks. The KNU delegation was led by KNU General-Secretary Naw Zipporah Sein, and the government side was led by U Aung Min, the Minister at the President's office.<sup>16</sup>

### **LOCAL RESIDENTS FLEE AS FIGHTING INTENSIFIES IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE, KACHIN STATE**

More than 1,000 Palaung ethnic residents in northern Shan state have fled their homes as fighting between government forces and several ethnic armed groups continues to erupt in the region. Lwe Poe Rein of the Taaung (Palaung) Students and Youth Association said fighting between the Burmese Army and armed groups including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Taaung National Liberation Army and the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N), near Kutkhai, Mongtong, Namhsang and Namtu townships has forced residents to abandon their homes. He added that the Burmese Army has 5 battalions active in the region and most of the displaced people are from Pankhagyi, Pankhalay, Naok, Sankaw and Konpaung villages in Mongtong Township and Mawaw village in Namtu Township. Aid has not been able to reach victims hiding in the jungle, most of whom are tea farmers whose land has been ruined by the fighting.

Meanwhile, relief groups in Kachin state have said heavy fighting in the Hpakant jade mining region has forced about 6,000 villagers to leave their homes. According to experts, there are an estimated

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<sup>14</sup> Like other armed groups, KIA may ink peace agreements if they follow internationally and generally-accepted peace processes –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 September 2012 (p. 16 & 8)

<sup>15</sup> President's messages on reshuffle and resignation of Union Ministers, resignation of Union Auditor-General; appointment and reshuffle of deputy ministers put on record –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-09-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 September 2012 (p. 16)

<sup>16</sup> KNU and Govt need more time to finalize ceasefire code of conduct –

<http://karennews.org/2012/09/knu-and-govt-need-more-time-to-finalize-ceasefire-code-of-conduct.html/> (Karen News) 7 September 2012



90,000 people in Kachin state who have been displaced. The KIA and Burmese troops have been involved in intense fighting, after a ceasefire broke down in June 2011. Although the government signed a raft of ceasefire deals earlier in 2012 with armed ethnic groups across the country, there continue to be brief skirmishes.<sup>17</sup>

### **KIA: 140 BURMESE SOLDIERS KILLED IN HPAKANT BLAST**

Kachin Independence Army (KIA) Officials claim that at as many as 140 soldiers from the Burmese military died on 29 August following a massive explosion at a mining compound that army forces were using as a temporary base in Kachin's state Hpakant (also Hpakan, Phakant) jade mining district. The massive explosion that ripped through the compound belonging to the Wai Aung Kaba Company near the Myauk Phyu jade mine reportedly caused the single highest one day death toll for the government side during its 15-month Kachin offensive so far. According to KIA sources, the blast was triggered by an initial smaller explosion planted by members of the Kachin resistance. At least one KIA soldier reportedly also died during the attack.

According to a KIA officer based in Hpakant, over the last two weeks of August the Burmese army has lost an additional 60 other troops during fighting with the KIA in the Hpakant region. These lethal clashes took place at Seng Tawng, Gwi Hka, Nam Maw, Myauk Phyu and Maw Mau Bum. In an effort to stop the Burma army from sending reinforcements to the Hpakant area as of 31 August Kachin resistance forces have completely shut down most entry points into the region. Tension in the region has been growing and on 31 August government forces transported at least 100 soldiers and weapons by helicopter to Hpakant and the Commander of the Light Infantry Division No.33 has been instructed to personally conduct the military operations there.<sup>18</sup>

### **CHIN NATIONAL FRONT FORMS PEACE TALK COMMITTEE**

The Chin National Front (CNF) has set up a peace talk committee, comprising 23 party members for discussions relating to stability and peace in Burma with President Thein Sein's government. The committee was formed during the 5<sup>th</sup> Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting from 24-31 August, CNF Supreme Council Chairman Pu Za Hlei Thang and Secretary General Pu Zing Cung were selected as leaders of the committee. The 23 committee members were selected from the CEC, Central Committee, Supreme Council members and leaders of the Chin National Army. The CNF announced that the committee was formed to conduct a political dialogue with the Central government of Burma. The statement said that the party discussed the approach for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Union-Level Peace talks including the venue as well as inviting observers. According to CNF Foreign Secretary Salai Thla Hei, a public consultation programme will be conducted with Chin people to apprise them on the development of the talks and also to garner public opinion. The meeting also discussed issues regarding the forthcoming Ethnic Nationalities Conference, CNF party and army issues, the opening of CNF liaison office. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Union Level Peace talks are scheduled for October 2012.<sup>19</sup>

### **ARAKAN LIBERATION PARTY (ALP) OPENS LIAISON OFFICE**

The Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) opened its first liaison office in Kyauk Taw Township on 3 September five months after the ALP and Rakhine State government signed a five point peace deal on 5 April 2012. The office on the upper Kaladan River close to Chin state's Paletwa and near Indo-Burma border. Those present at the opening ceremony included Rakhine State Minister for Border and Ethnic Affairs Colonel Htin Lin, Arakan State Chief of Justice U Hla Thei, and ALP CEC members Daw Mrara Zarlín and Khaing Soe Than Aung as well as other party members. According to Daw Mrara Zarlín the aim of the liaison office is to enable the ALP to communicate more efficiently and to

<sup>17</sup> Residents flee as fighting intensifies in northern Shan state –

<http://www.dvb.no/news/residents-flee-as-fighting-intensifies-in-northern-shan-state/23609> (DVB) 5 September 2012

<sup>18</sup> 140 Burma army troops killed in Hpakant blast on August 29 –

<http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2396-140-burma-army-troops-killed-in-hpakant-blast-on-august-29.html> (KNG) 6 September 2012

<sup>19</sup> CNF sets up peace talk committee with 23 members –

<http://khonumthung.org/?p=915> (Khonumthung) 1 September 2012

promote better understanding with the government and to communicate with the Arakan people more closely in order to help them work with the government to solve problems they face.

The 5-points of the peace agreement are: 1) to stop fighting each other, 2) to open liaison offices in Kyauktaw and Paletwa for mutual communication, 3) not to cross each others' areas holding weapons without prior information or negotiation, 4) to allow members of the ALP free travel across the nation, and 5) to continue negotiations for activities to build peace and development inside Arakan State. The Arakan Liberation Party and Arakan Liberation Army were established in 1973 at the KNU area on the Thai- Burma border. The ALP bases are currently on Thai-Burma border and Indo- Burma border.<sup>20</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The latest clashes between the Burmese Army and armed groups, including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Taaung National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Shan State Army (North), has cast doubts on the sincerity of the government's peace talks with the ethnic groups. While the peace negotiating teams at both the State/Regional and Federal levels have been conducting peace talks, the Burmese Army has opted to implement actions contradicting Naypyidaw's policy. It would seem that the Burma Army is taking advantage of the cease-fires and peace talks to rebuild and reinforce their bases in ethnic regions and such actions could undermine the fragile national reconciliation process. However, the recent peace talks between the KNU and the government, which included discussions on a "ceasefire code of conduct", have provided signs of hope, yet much more remains to be done in order to achieve peace permanently.

On the international front, visits by the Canadian Trade Minister, the US-ASEAN Eminent Persons Group and the Chair of the French Senate's South-Asia Committee to Burma reflect an indirect approval or even recognition on the democratic changes taken by President Thein Sein. With reforms still in their infancy, the question is if the changes are permanent and irreversible. Some observers continue to maintain and adopt a "cautious approach". The situation in Burma has now entered a period where the country's development and progress remains debatable. Whatever side or opinion one may have, it is evident that the on-going political process will not be achieved overnight and will require genuine commitment by the government and all stakeholders alike.

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<sup>20</sup> First Arakan Rebel Liaison Office Opens in Arakan State –  
<http://www.narinjara.com/main/index.php/first-arakan-rebel-liaison-office-opens-in-arakan-state/> (Narinjara) 4  
September 2012