
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 33

OFFICIAL MEDIA

EU COMMISSION PRESIDENT VISITS BURMA

A delegation led by European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso arrived in Burma on 3 November to begin a two-day official visit. President Barroso met Burmese President Thein Sein, Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann and National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. President Barroso urged President Thein Sein for an end to the communal violence in Rakhine State, but at the same time pledged EU support in helping the country. The two sides also exchanged views establishing closer ties between the EU and Burma, including EU support for peace process and assistance for rehabilitation tasks, capacity building, disaster-risk reductions and granting Generalized System of Preference to the country. The EU Commission President also attended the opening of the Myanmar Peace Centre, which is designed to facilitate “dialogue between all those concerned in the on-going ethnic peace process. A joint declaration on establishing the Centre was also signed between the two sides. In a statement released by the European Commission, the EU will contribute 700,000 euros to start-up the centre and in 2013, will make a further contribution of 30 million euros towards the ethnic peace process.¹ (Please see Annex A for full statement of the Joint Declaration signed between the EU and Burma).

NORWEGIAN PRIME MINISTER LEADS OFFICIAL DELEGATION TO BURMA

Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg arrived on 3 November for his first ever visit to Burma. During the visit Prime Minister Stoltenberg accompanied by Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide met President Thein Sein, Speaker of the Lower House Thura Shwe Mann and NLD leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and also attended a joint Norwegian-Danish embassy opening ceremony in Rangoon. During the official talks, the two sides exchanged views on promoting bilateral relations between the two countries. In his meeting with President Thein Sein, Stoltenberg praised the positive steps taken by the government on reforms and pledged his support towards the peace making processes and promotion of human rights in Burma. The visiting PM said, opening of the Norwegian embassy in Burma is a sign of improving relations between the two countries and that his country willing to further strengthen ties with the South-east Asian nation and has encouraged Norwegian companies to invest in the country.

The President said that the government is tackling unprecedented challenges like the communal rife in Rakhine State while at the same time, addressing one of the world’s longest ethnic conflicts. He also stated that the political reforms must be carried out simultaneously with the economic reforms and due 20 years of economic sanctions, Burma lacks capital, know-how and human resources and thanked Norway for being the first country to ease the sanctions. The President added expressed his

¹ European Commission President and party arrive in Naypyidaw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 9)/
Establishing closer ties between Myanmar and EC discussed – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 16)/
Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives EC President and party – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 8)/
Domestic conflicts, a barrier to transition – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 16)/
Joint declaration on EU support to peace-building in Myanmar – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 16)/
President Barroso travels to Asia – http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/news/archives/2012/10/20121031_1_en.htm (EU Commission President’s Official website)/
Speech at the Myanmar Peace Centre – http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-771_en.htm?locale=en (Europa Press Release) 3 November 2012/
EC President Barroso, Minister Aung Min Sign Joint Declaration at Myanmar Peace Centre – http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1167_en.htm?locale=en (Europa Press Release) 3 November 2012

appreciation to Norway for providing assistance humanitarian, environmental conservation and peace initiatives and hoped it would continue to help Burma in the future.²

DANISH PRIME MINISTER OPENS EMBASSY IN BURMA

Mrs Helle Thorning Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, attended a ceremony to open the Embassy of Denmark on 4 November in Yangon. In her opening address, the Danish PM said that the opening of the embassy is a new chapter between the governments of Burma and Denmark and between the two peoples would be used to further strengthen the relations and friendship between the two countries. Minister at the President's Office, U Aung Min expressed his hope that the bilateral friendship would help development of all sectors, especially, between the two peoples and social organizations. During the visit, the Danish leader also held talks with Union Ministers at the President Office U Aung Min and U Soe Thein, and Union Minister for Livestock and Fisheries U Ohn Myint and met separately with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairperson of the Pyithu Hluttaw Rules of Law and Peace and Stability Committee and held a press conference.³

SWISS EMBASSY OPENS IN BURMA

Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter arrived in Burma and officially opened the Swiss embassy in Yangon on 3 November. At the inauguration, FM Burkhalter said that Burma was now on the right track to becoming a democratic country, and to that end Switzerland would provide support in achieving these goals. He also added that "Switzerland will provide humanitarian aids worth about US\$ 8 million to Burma and has plans to raise the amount from about US\$11 million to US\$ 20 million in the coming year. In late 2013-2016, the aids will be raised to about US\$ 35 million." During the visit, the Swiss Foreign Minister called on Burmese President Thein Sein, his counterpart Wunna Maung Lwin and discussed further strengthening of ties between the two countries, and cooperation in rehabilitation and providing humanitarian aids, natural disasters, creating job opportunities, conducting health, food and vocational training. Switzerland has been active in Burma for almost two decades already, notably through providing humanitarian aid but with the opening of the new embassy in Yangon will further strengthen ties in the areas of peace support, human rights, health and food.⁴

PRESIDENT ATTENDS 9TH ASIA-EUROPE MEETING SUMMIT

President Thein Sein attended the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting Summit held at National Convention Centre Champi Grand Hall in Lao People's Democratic Republic on November 6. The Burmese President together with Heads of State/Government, deputy PMs and ministers from ASEAN, Asian

² Norwegian Prime Minister and wife arrive in Naypyitaw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 2)/ Norway encourages its companies to invest in Myanmar. Norwegian companies which are famous for telecommunication, oil and gas, hydropower and fertilizer sectors are going to do investment in Myanmar. Norway continues to fully support efforts of Myanmar for ending violence in Rakhine State, peace-making processes – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 1)/ Myanmar, Norway eye for promotion of ties – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 10)/ Norway Embassy established in Yangon – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 10)

³ Denmark opens embassy in Yangon – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 2)

⁴ Swiss FM and Federal Councillor and wife arrive in Yangon – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 9)/ Swiss embassy opens in Yangon – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 9)/ President U Thein Sein receives Swiss Foreign Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 November 2012 (p. 1)/ Union Foreign Affairs Minister receives Swiss counterpart – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 2)/ Statement by Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter - <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/recent/media/single.html?id=46564> (Swiss Foreign Ministry website) 2 November 2012

and European countries, the ASEAN secretary-general, the European Commission president, deputy ministers and high-level officials attended the opening session with an address by Laotian Premier Thongsing Thammavong. During the summit, the heads of the ASEAN, Asia and European countries exchanged views on food sufficiency and fuel security, sustainable development, climate change, disaster risk management cooperation in social and cultural sectors and win-win issues in regional and international arena. This year's summit entitled "Friends for Peace, Partners for Prosperity" also welcomed Bangladesh, Norway and Switzerland as new members to ASEM. On the sidelines of the summit, President Thein Sein held bilateral meetings with leaders from Asia and Europe including the Prime Ministers of Australian, Finland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Italy and German Foreign Minister and Austrian Deputy Minister for Finance and discussed matters of mutual interest as well as regional and international affairs.⁵

GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND AMBASSADORS VISIT RIOT-TORN AREAS IN RAKHINE STATE

General Hla Min of Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office, Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Thein Htay accompanied by state government officials, resident representatives of UN agencies visited Myebon and Mrauk-U townships on 27 October and met those affected by the recent communal riots. The Minister for Border Affairs General Thein Htay urged for stability and the rule of within the State and not to harbor hatred, enmity and action of revenge. Similarly, the UN Resident Representative Ashok Nigam said the United Nations would provide humanitarian assistance without discrimination against races and urged local people to live together peacefully in line with democratic practices and build together better future. On 28 October, the Union Minister General Thein Htay met Turkish Ambassador to Myanmar Murat Yavuz Ates and party at Rakhine State government and discussed distribution of Turkey-donated relief aids and assistance of Turkey and also went to Thekkelbyin relief camp to meet the displaced persons. Ambassadors from the UK, US and Australia accompanied by Union ministers travelled to Maungtaw 4 November to inspect rehabilitation work being and promised to take prompt action to provide international assistance to those affected by the recent violence. In their meeting with the western diplomats, the Rakhine State chief minister said adequate security forces have been deployed to conflict areas to restore tranquility and the rule of law and called for suggestions to ensure social harmony between the two

⁵ President U Thein Sein leaves for Lao PDR to attend 9th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM9) – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 16)/
President U Thein Sein arrives in Vientiane, Lao PDR – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 16)/
President U Thein Sein attends opening session of 9th ASEM – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2012 (p.16)/
President U Thein Sein attends plenary session of 9th ASEM – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2012 (p. 1)/
President U Thein Sein attends 9th ASEM Summit – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p.1)/
World countries need to increase food production, improve distribution to feed entire population sufficiently. President U Thein Sein delivers address at 9th Asia-Europe Meeting Summit – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p.1 & 9)/
President U Thein Sein meets Australian Prime Minister Ms. Julia Gillard – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2012 (p. 16)/
President U Thein Sein holds talks with Finnish PM in Vientiane – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 1)/
Myanmar, Luxembourg keen on economic cooperation – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 1)/
President U Thein Sein receives German Foreign Affairs Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p. 9)/
President U Thein Sein held talks with Austrian Deputy Finance Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p. 9)/
President U Thein Sein, Danish Prime Minister hold talks – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p. 9)/
President U Thein Sein receives Italian Prime Minister Mr Mario Monti – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p. 9)

societies. Due to riots and violence occurred from 21 to 27 October in Rakhine State, 2950 houses, 14 religious buildings and eight rice mills were burnt down and 84 people were killed and 129 injured. The President's Office has also issued a statement which has urged for all those involved to end the conflict in a peaceful way. Similarly, precautionary have been also been put in place to prevent further outbreak of violence the authorities concerned announced that all guns, bayonets, swords, daggers, spears, bow and arrow, arms and things related arms defined in the section 4 (d) of the Arms Act (1878) are to be handed over to the nearby police stations and security forces as quickly as possible as of 3 November, 2012.⁶ (Please see Appendix A for full statement of the issued by the President's office).

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 5th regular session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw was held for the 7th day at Pyithu Hluttaw Complex in Naypyitaw and attended by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and 359 MPs.

During the session, 5 questions were raised and answered, one proposal submitted, informing Hluttaw, submitting important proposal carried out.

- The key proposal submitted during the session was by U Mann Maung Maung Nyan of Pantanaw Constituency who urged **the Union Government to make quick response to townships where conflicts are ongoing and which are vulnerable to violence by increasing the number of security forces and level of security for ensuring rule of law and tranquility and decisions in accord with the law on matters with regard to violation of law and human rights.** In responding, the Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko, replied that **the proposal was appropriate one and timely given and that it would be put on record.**⁷

⁶ Authorities vow to probe into Rakhine incident and take legal actions against instigators – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 October 2012 (p. 2)/ Thanks to collaborative efforts of Rakhine State government, authorities concerned, members of security force, monks and locals, situation returns to normalcy – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2012 (p. 1 & 9)/ Union Border Affairs Minister makes coordination on relief and resettlement works in Rakhine State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2012 (p. 2)/ Authority, resident representatives of UN agencies look into situation in Yanbye, Kyaukpyu – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2012 (p.2)/ Everyone has a same wish to enjoy peace and stability in future in spite of holding different views – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2012 (p.1 & 9)/ All are to establish a peaceful, tolerant human society, setting aside hatred among the society – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 9)/ Authorities vow to probe into Rakhine incident and take legal actions against instigators – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 October 2012 (p. 2)/ Thanks to collaborative efforts of Rakhine State government, authorities concerned, members of security force, monks and locals, situation returns to normalcy – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2012 (p. 1 & 9)/ Union Border Affairs Minister makes coordination on relief and resettlement works in Rakhine State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2012 (p. 2)/ Authority, resident representatives of UN agencies look into situation in Yanbye, Kyaukpyu – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2012 (p. 2)/ Everyone has a same wish to enjoy peace and stability in future in spite of holding different views – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2012 (p. 1 & 9)/ All are to establish a peaceful, tolerant human society, setting aside hatred among the society – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 9)/ Ambassadors visit riot-torn areas in Rakhine – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2012 (p. 8)/ Swords, bayonets and arms to be handed over to nearby security forces within three days - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 November 2012 (p. 2)

⁷ Five questions answered, one proposal submitted, informing Hluttaw, submitting important proposal carried out – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 October 2012 (p. 9)/ Deputy Health Minister responds to questions of three representatives – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 October 2012 (p. 9)/

On the 8th day session, 2 questions were raised and answered and the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann briefed the session on the sending of messages regarding proposals submitted and discussed in parliament.

- U Maung Toe of Minhla Constituency asked **the number of State-owned factories and workshops in the country at present; whether there are factories and workshops under way for privatization for the time being and in which form they will be privatized if there is any; and inflation rate according to economic condition of 2011-2012 financial year.** In responding, the Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Daw Khin San Yi said, that there are totally 266 State-owned factories and workshops in operation at present, the Privatization Commission has 17 factories yet to sell out whereas Ministry of Agriculture has one, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, three, Ministry of Industry, six, Ministry of Forestry, six, and Ministry of Commerce, one. Those factories, according to the deputy minister, will be sold through open tender system. And, the inflation rate is 2.82.
- Regarding the sending of messages, Speaker Thura Shwe Mann explained that it was done in the interests of the nation and citizens. He also emphasized that messages are sent to take actions for approved proposals while some proposals were decided to put on record and monitor. Agencies concerned are obliged to handle the latter which they assume responsibility. To date, the Speaker has sent 26 messages to the President, 11 to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker, 9 to the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker and one to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Union and has so far received 45 messages from the President.⁸

The 9th day session was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and 394 MPs. During the session, 6 questions were raised and answered, 1 proposal d and 1 bill submitted.

- U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun Constituency on **“whether or not the government gave green light to private newspapers from the period between 1965-1967 in Myanmar and Union Government will allow to publish private newspapers according to the Printers and Publishers Registration Law (1962)”**. In responding, Union Minister for Information U Aung Kyi said that some private newspapers were in operation during the period between 1965 and 1967 at time when the Printers and Publishers Registration Law (1962) was still in force, though approval will be given for publication of private newspapers in the near future.⁹

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 5th regular session of the first Amyotha Hluttaw held its 7th day at Amyotha Hluttaw Hall of Hluttaw Building and was attended by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and 194 MPs. During the session, 11 questions were raised and answered and 1 proposal submitted.

- As the conflicts between industrialists and farmers have come under the spotlight, parliamentarian U Thein Swe asked **if the government has plans to assure rights and ownership of farmland for exploited farmers who tenant on farms procured by companies, organizations and individuals hand in glove with local authorities.** Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Ohn Than replied that the region/state governments would probe into the reported

No one with taxable income entitled to income tax exemption –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 October 2012 (p. 9)/

Financial and monetary policy will set interest rates –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 October 2012 (p. 9)/

⁸ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker explains sending of messages –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2012 (p. 8)/

Inflation rate stands at 2.82 for 2011-2012 fiscal year: Deputy NPED Minister –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2012 (p. 8)

⁹ Private newspapers will emerge soon –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p. 2)

cases on the ground in line with promulgated laws, bylaws and procedures and settle before the law with justice.¹⁰

On the 8th day, 5 questions were raised and answered, one bill approved and one proposal discussed. The session was attended by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and 186 representatives. During the session, Amyotha Hluttaw National Planning Committee member U Maung Maung Aye, submitted the report on progress of tasks carried out by the Committee from January to October, 2012.¹¹

On the 9th day, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and 193 representatives attended the session.

During the session, a proposal to revoke the Myanmar Citizenship Law and one proposal submitted.

- Regarding the proposal urging the **Union government to promulgate new Myanmar Citizenship Law after revoking the existing Myanmar Citizenship Law (1882)Pyithu Hluttaw Law No- 4)**, U Mann Kan Nyunt of Kayin State Constituency No (2), U Khin Maung (a) U Aung Kyaw Oo of Rakhine State Constituency No (3), U Maung Aye Tun of Rakhine State Constituency No (9), U Kyaw Kyaw of Rakhine State Constituency No (2), Dr Banya Aung Moe of Mon State Constituency No (7), U Khin Maung Latt of Rakhine State Constituency No (6), U Ohn Tin of Rakhine State Constituency No (10), and U Hsai Paung Nut of Shan State Constituency No (12) took part in the discussions.
- Union Minister for Immigration and Population U Khin Yi replied that arrangements were being made to amend the impractical words and regulations in the law and by-laws; that relaxations of visa system under the name of Visa Policy in Myanmar were being realized for foreign investors to be able to do their business in the country easily. The Union Minister urged to pinpoint which chapter or sections of 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law are required to amend. He said that if the whole law must be amended, wider discussions would be held for the good of the country; that it was required to take time for the proposal in accord with the time and circumstances. Hluttaw announced to put the proposal on record.
- U Saw Tun Mya Aung of Kayin State Constituency No (5) submitted a proposal to make necessary preparations in cooperation with the group comprising local national races in the process of doing citizenship scrutiny cards and household registration of national races.¹²

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT TO BEGIN POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITH ARMED GROUPS: AUNG MIN

The President Office's Minister Aung Min said the government will commence political dialogues in December with the country's armed ethnic groups who have signed ceasefire agreements. The minister made the announcement while meeting with representatives from an alliance of 10 political parties on 3 November, said National Democratic Force (NDF) chairman Khin Maung Swe who attended the talks. "U Aung Min said there is a plan to have a political dialogue with groups that previously made ceasefire agreements – he said he was ready to have the dialogue with the KIO [Kachin Independence Organisation] who have not reached a ceasefire agreement," said the NDF's chairman. Khin Maung Swe said the representatives at the meeting urged the minister to invite

¹⁰ Amyotha Hluttaw continues for seventh day –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 October 2012 (p. 9)/
MP asks plan for assuring rights of exploited farmers –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 October 2012 (p. 9)/
Questions focuses on infrastructural development –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-10-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 October 2012 (p. 9)

¹¹ Five questions on education matter answered, one bill approved, one proposal discussed –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2012 (p. 9)

¹² Proposal to revoke Myanmar Citizenship Law -1882 put on record –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p. 10)/
Strand road available for trucks soon, YCDC speeding up water supply projects: Deputy Minister –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 November 2012 (p. 10)

ethnic political parties to join the talks as observers. “There should be transparency for the people [so they] know what the government is doing,” said Khin Maung Swe. “We suggested the minister to allow observers from political parties; maybe from about three ethnic-based parties and about two mainland-based parties.” After kick starting a new round of peace talks in the past year with several of the country’s armed groups, the government has continued to push for a three-point plan that favours ceasefires and economic development in conflict zones before addressing potential political solutions that could end the countries numerous civil wars. However, fighting in Kachin state continues to rage and prominent armed groups like the Karen National Union have been calling for talks centered on political negotiations that would grant ethnic states more political autonomy.¹³

ABSDF AND KNPP TO MEET GOVERNMENT’S CHIEF PEACE NEGOTIATOR

The Burmese government’s Union-level peacemaking group, led by President’s Office Minister Aung Min, arrived in Thailand on 9 November is expected to meet members of the exiled All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) and representatives of ethnic armed groups, said Hla Maung Shwe, a government peace delegate. Hla Maung Shwe also stated that the meetings with the both the ABSDF and KNPP are scheduled to be held in Chiang Mai. Speaking to the media, KNPP secretary Aung San Myint said, “From our perspective, we want to review the 14 points we agreed when we signed the cease-fire agreement with the government on June 9.” Aung San Myint also reiterated that the KNPP delegates wanted to discuss several other issues including the withdrawal of government troops from Karenni State; the deployment of human rights monitors in the region; a monitoring aspect for the cease-fire; matters relating to the Ywathit hydropower project; and putting a stop to the Burmese army’s plan to build a military training ground in Karenni’s Pruso Township. The ABSDF has stated that a statement would be issued by the group after meeting with U Aung Min. The meeting is being used to communicate with all ‘stake holders’ in the peace process, build mutual trust and work a step-by-step manner, said Hla Maung Shwe.¹⁴

GOVERNMENT AGREES TO POLITICAL TALKS WITH KIO

The Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) has welcomed a promise from lead government peace negotiator U Aung Min to pursue political talks. The concession from the government, which has in the past proposed ceasefire talks before political negotiations, came during a meeting held in Shweli, China, on October 30. U Aung Min, who is also a minister in the President’s Office, said the government would try to resolve the conflict through political means in order to achieve peace. “We have reiterated our demand for political dialogue. War is waged because political problems are unresolved. If there are no political problems, there is no war. So we must hold political discussions,” said U Swong Lut Gum, head of the KIO delegation. “Political problems cannot be resolved by means of war but war will be resolved politically.” He said the KIO has coveted political negotiations since it took up arms against the central government in the early 1960s. While a ceasefire was signed in 1994, the military government deferred political talks, saying they would be the responsibility of a civilian government established under the 2008 constitution. For its part, the government team demanded the KIO’s armed wing, the Kachin Independence Army, not launch attacks against transport infrastructure, that conflict be scaled down, and that more than 50 Chinese workers be allowed to pass through a KIO checkpoint to repair the Tapain Hydropower Project. The meeting however was overshadowed by the absence of KIA deputy commander-in-chief General Gun Maw who did not attend the meeting and consequently the government reciprocated by not dispatching its Chief of the Bureau of Special Operations Lieutenant General Myint Soe to the talks.¹⁵

¹³ Gov’t to begin political dialogues with armed groups: Aung Min – <http://www.dvb.no/news/gov%E2%80%99t-to-begin-political-dialogues-with-armed-groups-aung-min/24615> (DVB) 5 November 2012

¹⁴ Aung Min delegation to meet ABSDF, KNPP in Thailand – <http://mizzima.com/news/regional/8377-aung-min-delegation-to-meet-absdf-knpp-in-thailand-.html> (Mizzima) 9 November 2012

¹⁵ Government agrees to political talks with KIO – <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/2890-govt-agrees-to-political-talks-with-kio.html> (Myanmar Times) 5 November 2012

NLD MEMBERS RESIGN FOLLOWING ROW WITH PARTY LEADERS

More than 130 National League for Democracy (NLD) members have resigned in protest of alleged “cronism” within its leadership over the selection of members to help organise the party’s upcoming national convention. Grassroots members in the Irrawaddy division’s Bassein (Patheingyi) township have accused the NLD of selecting members with close personal ties to its leadership over long-serving members for the convention’s organising commission. Dr Than Htike, who worked with the NLD since the 1990s, said the mass resignation on 26 October aimed to raise awareness among the party’s leadership about ongoing dissatisfaction at the local level. “Some central leaders are not aware of the complaints from local members so we wanted to get their attention,” said Than Htike. “If the leading members continue to only do what their aides say, there will be dissension and disunity in the party, which will cause it to split.” Dissent within the NLD has been on the rise since the summer. In August, NLD veterans Than Win, Nyunt Hlaing, Than Htike and 300 other local members held a press conference in Bassein township, accusing the party’s central committee of undemocratic practices. The NLD subsequently suspended all three and closed the NLD campaign office in Bassein. Hundreds of members have also taken to the streets in Twante and Myaungmya townships to protest perceived favouritism in the upper echelons of the NLD, with similar accusation made in Thone Kwa township in Rangoon. The party’s Lower House MP in Bassein, Win Myint, said that the leadership has been aware of growing irritation among local members since Aung San Suu Kyi visited the flood-hit area this summer. But the NLD insists that none of the party member in Bassein have effectively communicated their grievances. “We don’t know what they were upset about apart from that they didn’t get appointments in the Convention Organisation Commission,” said Kyaw Ho of the NLD’s Irrawaddy Division Convention Organising Commission. “For now, we don’t know how many people resigned because we haven’t received any list or notification about it.” Suu Kyi has previously accused dissenting members of “misus[ing] free speech for their own interests.” “We cannot misuse the privilege of having the right to do what we want. Nor can we say whatever we want, even if we have the right to say it,” she told party members. “We must think before we speak about whether or not our speech is right.” According to the NLD, Than Htike and other local members refused to hand over the disputed campaign office so the NLD declared it was no longer recognized by the party. Local members also met with NLD co-founder U Win Tin on 13 October but failed to reach an agreement. Than Htike says NLD patron U Tin Oo then ordered its closure on 20 October, despite their requests to reconsider. Than Htike said the resigned NLD members are planning to form a new group called the Network for National Democracy. This is not the first time factionalism has led to defections within the NLD’s ranks. High-ranking members who disagreed with Suu Kyi’s boycott of the November 2010 polls controversially split to form the National Democratic Force party.¹⁶

NIPPON FOUNDATION TO LAUNCH EMERGENCY AID IN MON KAREN STATES

The Nippon Foundation has agreed to provide USD 3 million in humanitarian aid to fund infrastructure, food, and medicine for refugees from Burma living on the border and in ethnic areas and is set to begin next month. The Nippon Foundation which organized a “Conference on Emergency Humanitarian Aid to Myanmar Ethnic Groups” in Japan on 18 October and attended by 19 UNFC representatives, an agreement was made to provide aid to through domestic organizations as soon as possible. Nai Hong Sar Bon Khine, an official of the New Mon State Party’s Foreign Affairs Department, was a participant in the conference, said, “Now, due to the transportation and geographic situation, the aid will preliminarily be provided to Mon and Karen areas. Meanwhile, negotiations regarding the provision of aid to other ethnic areas are underway, and will lead to delivery when finished.” UNFC Secretary Nai Hong Sar explained, “The aid provided by the Nippon Foundation will be delivered to UNFC member areas and also to non-UNFC affiliated regions of Rakhine and Southern Shan States. In addition to providing humanitarian aid, the Nippon Foundation is keen to mediate the peace processes between the Burmese government and the armed ethnic

¹⁶ NLD members resign following row with party’s leaders –

<http://www.dvb.no/news/nld-members-resign-following-row-with-partys-leaders/24533> (DVB) 30 October 2012

groups. Although the Peace Making Committee led by Minister U Aung Min recently called for an informal meeting with the UNFC, an exact date has not yet been determined, according to Nai Hong Sar.¹⁷

TWO MON POLITICAL PARTIES SEEK UNIFICATION AND OPEN JOINT OFFICE

The two Mon political parties, the All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMDP) and Mon Democracy Party (MDP), opened a joint office in Kamarwet Village in Mudon Township, Mon State on November 1 as a step to improve the relationship between the two parties. The newly opened office is intended to be a place where both parties can gather, negotiate and cooperate together as a unified party. According to MDP leader Dr Min Kyi who attended the opening ceremony said that the an agreement has been reached to combine the two parties and that leaders from both parties issued a joint statement on October 13 that set December 2014 as the deadline for AMDP and MDP unification. Mon people and Buddhist monks have been negotiating a unification of the two Mon political parties for nearly a year, and this marked the first time the two parties have reached an agreement to open a joint office. Many Mon residents are relieved and see this as a positive sign for future cooperation between the two parties. "Their agreement to open this office is a good sign, I think. Many positives can happen in the future for these two parties because of this initial agreement," said the Ven. Saukha Hongsar, a senior Mon Buddhist monk in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State and member of the negotiating committee between the two political parties.¹⁸

ANALYSIS

The once strained relations between Burma and European Union have taken a step forward following the visit of the President of the European Commission Barroso and the successful opening of three embassies in Burma from three European countries – Switzerland, Norway and Denmark. President Barroso's visit also sees the creation of a Myanmar Peace Centre, which will no doubt become instrumental in addressing the on-going peace negotiations between the government and the ethnic armed groups. Similarly, the opening of embassies reflects the recognition by the international community for the reforms being implemented by President Thein Sein. As the country aspires to open up and transform its image abroad, its internal affairs have proven to become the major challenges for the government. The communal violence in Rakhine State has taken a respite, while fighting continues to rage in some parts of the Kachin State. Both the Rakhine State communal violence and the Kachin State conflicts are becoming the nemesis for the government and will need to be handled carefully if the country is to move forward in the right direction. Due to negligence by successive governments in the past as well as failing to address to situation from a bottom-up approach has also contributed to the matters getting out of hand especially in the Rakhine State. On the bright side, the news that the government is now planning to sit down with the KIO for political talks is indeed timely and welcome. The commission formed to investigate the riots has been hit with setbacks and during the past week has seen two of its members known to be Muslim community leaders have been removed. While no official report has yet to emerge regarding the recent violence, it is important to note that the Commission's findings will provide some answers but will not be sufficient in ending the years of animosity between the two communities. Under such circumstances, the government both at the federal and regional level need to draw up long-term initiatives involving all stakeholders as well as nurturing respect and understanding between the two communities. If left undone, similar occurrences of community violence could spread to other parts of the country and even jeopardizing the reform path being implemented by President Thein Sein.

¹⁷ Nippon Foundation to launch emergency aid in Mon and Karen areas – <http://monnews.org/?p=4068> (IMNA) 28 October 2012 / Nippon Foundation to give \$3 million in aid to ethnic areas – <http://www.mizzima.com/news/regional/8302-nippon-foundation-to-give-3-million-in-aid-to-ethnic-areas.html> (Mizzima) 26 October 2012

¹⁸ Political Party Unification Moves Forward With Opening of New Office – <http://www.kaowao.org/2012news-November-4.php> (Kaowao) 4 November 2012 / Two Mon parties inaugurate shared office – <http://monnews.org/?p=4071> (IMNA) 3 November 2012

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Announcement Regarding Conflicts in Rakhine State

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

President Office

Announcement (2/ 2012)

31 October 2012

1st Waning of Thadingyut, 1374 ME

1. President Office has already issued Announcement No (1/2012) that individuals and organizations that were behind the incidents in Rakhine State will be exposed and legal action will be taken against them.
2. Starting from 21 to 30 October 2012, 89 people were killed, 136 wounded and 5351 houses burnt down, leaving 32231 people homeless in the renewed waves of conflicts.
3. The conflicts between the two communities showed signs of evolving into an armed violence, even threatening security forces. A total of 180 percussion lock firearms were seized in the violent incidents. Besides, actions are being taken against some arms-markers and evidences used in making arms were seized.
4. It is found that organization on the other side well prepared their activities with organized arrangements using local made arms to commit mob threats, terrorist attacks and violence and arson attacks. It is obvious that not only political parties and organizations that made peace with the government but also some local and foreign organizations that are on the side of the other organization involved in the incidents.
5. In addressing the conflicts in a peaceful way, it is required to be wise enough to take measures that benefit both sides in accordance with the law. With regard to the recent incidents, all monks and people are urged to join hand with the aim of preventing the image of the State from being tarnished so that the nation can stand tall among the world nations.
6. It is announced that now is the time when the government is taking actions against those who are involved in conflicts and individuals and organizations who are behind the scene so that such kinds of incidents with the devastating impacts on lives and property of the people not occur again.¹⁹

Appendix B:

Joint Declaration on EU Support for Peace Building in Burma

Both the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the European Union acknowledge the currently offered historic chances for securing lasting peace in Myanmar. The prospect of creating trust, building peace, enhancing the respect for human rights and helping economic prosperity in regions emerging from violent conflict must not be missed. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the European Union are determined to cooperate closely in this joint endeavour. The Myanmar Peace Centre, as established by Presidential Decree, shall serve as a platform for inclusive and non-partisan dialogue. It shall reach out to all groups and communities connected to the peace process, including international and national, governmental and nongovernmental, individuals and organizations at both the regional and central levels. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the European Union expect and believe that the Myanmar Peace Centre will be a key element for achieving a just and lasting peace in Myanmar. The European Union is keen to support the Myanmar Peace Centre in the carrying out of its important mandate.

Done at Yangon, 3 November 2012

For the European Union
José Manuel Barroso
President of the European
Commission

For the Government of the Republic of the Union of
Myanmar
U Aung Min
Union Minister at the President's Office²⁰

¹⁹ Announcement regarding conflicts in Rakhine State –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 November 2012 (p.2)

²⁰ Joint declaration on EU support to peace-building in Myanmar –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2012 (p. 16)