

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 7

OFFICIAL MEDIA

MON GROUP SIGNS CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT WITH UNION-LEVEL PEACEMAKING GROUP

The representatives from the main Mon armed group of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Union- Level government representatives signed a ceasefire agreement on 25 February in the Mon State capital Mawlamyine. The initial 5-point peace agreement reached State-level peace-making group on 1 February was approved and signed followed by the signing of the 4-point agreement with the Union level delegation. The ceremony was attended by Union-Level Peacemaking Group leader Union Minister U Aung Min, NMSP Vice-Chairman U Nai Rawsa and peace negotiators from both sides. The salient points of the agreement include 1) the need for a nation-wide cease-fire to end fighting in ethnic areas, 2) to start a political dialogue within 45 days, 3) the continuation of talks on national reconciliation based on political compromises with the participation of representatives of domestic national political parties and democratic forces and 4) (under the general clauses) releasing political prisoners.¹ (*Please see Annex A for the full text of the agreement.*)

KNPP & STATE LEVEL PEACE-MAKING GROUP SIGNS INITIAL AGREEMENT

The Kayinni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and the Kayah State government signed an initial peace agreement on 7 March in the Kayah State capital Loikaw, agreeing to 1) a cease-fire [on] both sides, 2) to open [a] liaison camp at the suitable place (without arms) agreed by both sides, and 3) to officially form the representative teams for holding the Union-Level peace talks and to coordinate date, time and place for the talk[s]. A five-member team from the State-Level Peace-Making group led by Col Tin Soe of and the KNPP led by Col Phone Naing, Adjutant-General of Kayinni State Armed Forces and Party Central Committee member signed the initial agreement in the presence of Union Minister for Rail Transportation U Aung Min, leader of the Union-Level Peace-making group, as well as senior government Ministers and KNPP leaders. A 20-point paper was also submitted by the KNPP to the government for the forthcoming Union-Level peace talks.²

KIO & UNION PEACE MAKING GROUP RELEASE STATEMENT AFTER 3rd ROUND OF PEACE TALKS

The Union level peace-making group and a central delegation of Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) held peace talks for the 3rd time in Shweli, China from 8-11 March. The two sides cordially discussed the points from the previous two meetings and issued the following joint-statement:

1. The two sides have satisfied the peace talks between the Union level peace-making group of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and KIO's central delegation.
2. The peace talks have seen progress and the two sides could build trust during the meetings.
3. The peace talks will continue through political means.
4. The two sides believe that military tensions would be decreased as a result of the peace talks.
5. The two sides will continue to discuss the issues related to the outposts in conflict areas until the two sides reach an agreement and will carry on the agreement after setting dates.³

Unofficial: However, a failure to agree on the withdrawal of Burmese government troops from KIO controlled areas prevented the KIO and government peace delegation from reaching an agreement.⁴

¹ Union-level peace-making group and NMSP ink initial peace deal - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 February 2012 (p. 16 & 10)

² State level peace-making group, KNPP peace-making group sign initial agreement - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 March 2012 (p. 11 & 12)

³ Union level peace-making group, KIO delegation release joint-statement after third peace talks - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-12.pdf> (NLM) 12 March 2012 (p. 9)

⁴ Little progress in KIO, gov't talks - <http://mizzima.com/special/kachin-battle-report/6739-little-progress-in-kio-govt-talks.html> (Mizzima) 12 March 2012

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DELEGATION MAKES 1st OFFICIAL VISIT

A group of 11 MEPs (European Parliament Members) representing the European Parliament's (EP) Delegation for relations with the countries of Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) made an official visit to Burma in order to establish formal inter-parliamentary relations from 27 February to 2 March 2012. President U Thein Sein received Dr. Werner Langen (ASEAN Delegation Chairman - EPP, Germany) and the 10 accompanying MEPs - Barbara Lochbihler (Human Rights Committee Chairwoman - Greens/EFA & Germany), Robert Goebbels (S&D, Luxembourg), Ivo Belet (EPP, Belgium), Francesco Enrico Speroni (EFD, Italy), Jean Lambert (Greens/EFA, United Kingdom), Wolf Klinz (ALDE, Germany), Barbara Weiler (S&D, Germany), Julie Girling (ECR, United Kingdom), Csaba Sógor (EPP, Romania) & MARINESCU Marian-Jean Marinescu (EPP; Romania) - in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 February. Those present also included senior cabinet ministers and departmental heads, and they discussed on-going developments of internal politics and promotion of regional and international relations. The delegation also met the Speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses, Election Commission Chairman U Tin Aye and Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission U Win Mra.⁵

The MEPs also met opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi on 29 February. The European Parliament had awarded her its Sakharov Prize in 1990, however due to her house arrest she was unable to attend the award ceremony in the EP. The delegation extended an invitation from current EP President Martin Schulz to come to Brussels to address the European Parliament.⁶

Unofficial

MEP Langen said that Burma's recent moves toward democracy are "very impressive" and that "the decision to lift sanctions would be dependent on the way by-elections are held in April". He added that "the most important development would be to improve the lives of the people in Myanmar", as more than 50 per cent of population lives in rural areas, and they need infrastructure, water, technology, and investment. According to MEP Lochbihler it is important for the Burmese government to show that it can return the soldiers to the barracks and end decades of serious human rights abuses and fighting in ethnic areas across the country. However she noted that the EU delegation got the impression that Burmese members of Parliament take their jobs very seriously and want to represent their constituencies.⁷

⁵ European Parliament delegation to meet Sakharov laureate Aung San Suu Kyi - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20120227IPR39436/html/European-Parliament-delegation-to-meet-Sakharov-laureate-Aung-Suu-Kyi> (European Parliament) 27 February 2012 / President U Thein Sein receives MEP, Chairman of European parliament's delegation to ASEAN - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 February 2012 (p. 1) / Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives EU parliament member - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 February 2012 (p. 5) / Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives EU parliament member - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 February 2012 (p. 2) / UEC Chairman receives EU parliament member - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 February 2012 (p. 2) / MNHRC Chairman receives European Parliament member - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 March 2012 (p. 6)

⁶ MEPs meet Aung San Suu Kyi - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20120223STO39241/html/MEPs-wish-Aung-Suu-Kyi-success-in-upcoming-Myanmar-elections> (European Parliament) 1 March 2012

⁷ Burmese election, human rights to influence lifting E.U. sanctions - <http://mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6686-burmese-election-human-rights-to-influence-lifting-eu-sanctions.html> (Mizzima) 2 March 2012

BURMESE PRESIDENT RECEIVES NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN MINISTER McCULLY

President U Thein Sein received a delegation led by Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand Murray McCully on 6 March in Nay Pyi Taw. They exchanged views on promoting bilateral ties and cooperation between the two countries in a frank and cordial manner. FM McCully also called on his counter U Wunna Maung Lwin as well as Lower House Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann. His visit is the first visit to Burma for 54 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations in November 1954.⁸

US SPECIAL ENVOY MITCHELL LEADS FACT FINDING MISSION

US Special Envoy and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar Derek Mitchell returned to Burma for an official visit and met with Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann on 13 March in Nay Pyi Taw. They exchanged views and discussed duties, responsibilities and authority of Hluttaw committees and progress of their tasks, undertakings of the Fundamental Rights of Citizens, Democracy and Human Rights Committee and the Peasant, Worker and Youth Affairs Committee, as well as cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries. The Special Envoy also met Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and Union Election Commission Chairman U Tin Aye.⁹

Unofficial

Mitchell announced at the press conference following his meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi that the US government would provide US \$1.5 million to assist those forced to flee fighting between government forces and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), which will be distributed through the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR.¹⁰ He also paid an official visit to Mandalay as part of his fact finding mission to ensure that April's by-elections will be free and fair, amid reports that voting has been scrapped in 10 villages in Kachin state. Mitchell's delegation met with officials from the National League for Democracy (NLD) including the party's election campaign coordinator. The delegation was investigating the current political situation prior to elections.¹¹

CANADIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BAIRD MAKES 1ST OFFICIAL VISIT

President U Thein Sein received a goodwill delegation led by Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird on 8 March. At the meeting, they cordially discussed matters related to further strengthening friendly ties between the two countries, economic cooperation and investment. Baird also met Lower House Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin. They discussed matters relating to developments in Burma, preparations for the 1 April by-elections, affairs concerning with Pyithu Hluttaw, as well as bilateral cooperation Burma and Canada.¹²

⁸ U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, receives Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand and party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 March 2012 (p. 1) / Myanmar, New Zealand to promote bilateral ties and cooperation -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 March 2012 (p. 2) /

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 March 2012 (p. 2)

⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives US Special Envoy and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 March 2012 (p. 2) /

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint receives US Special Envoy and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar and party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 March 2012 (p. 8) /

UEC Chairman meets US Special Envoy and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 March 2012 (p. 8)

Those present included Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa, Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw International Relations Committee U Hla Myint Oo, Chairman of the Investment and Industrial Development Committee U Htay Myint, members of the Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission and officials of the Hluttaw Office.

¹⁰ US Aid to Bring Little Relief to Kachin Refugees -

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=23231 (Irrawaddy) 16 March 2012

¹¹ US concerned as polling stations scrapped -

<http://www.dvb.no/news/us-concerned-as-polling-stations-scrapped/20932> (DVB) 19 March 2012

¹² President U Thein Sein receives Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 March 2012 (p. 1) /

Unofficial

In a statement following his 7-8 March visit – the first to Burma by a Canadian foreign minister – Baird said that there was “palpable optimism in the streets” of Yangon and that the government had taken “several very positive steps” since taking office in March 2011, and reiterated the importance of the by-elections being free and fair. He also conferred an honorary citizenship on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – one of just four people to have received the honour.¹³

ROBERT COOPER (ADVISER TO EU FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY CHIEF ASHTON) MEETS BURMESE ELECTION OFFICIALS

Union Election Commission Chairman U Tin Aye received Robert Cooper, who is a Counsellor in the European External Action Service and also an adviser to the EU’s High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, on 5 March. They had a cordial discussion and exchanged views on latest developments of Burma and preparations for the 1 April by-elections to be in accord with democratic practices as well as to be held in a free and fair manner. Those present included UEC members U Aung Myint, U Tha Oo, Dr Daw Myint Kyi, U Win Kyi, Secretary U Win Ko and other officials.¹⁴

MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS BURMA

A goodwill delegation led by Malaysian Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman paid a call on President U Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw on 15 March. They had a cordial discussion on promoting friendship and cooperation and enhancing trade and investment between two countries. FM Seri Anifah also held a separate meeting with his counterpart U Wunna Maung Lwin and discussed matters of interest and further strengthening of ties between Burma and Malaysia.¹⁵

BURMESE LEADERS RECEIVE VIETNAMESE FOREIGN MINISTER

Vietnamese Foreign Affairs Minister Pham Binh Minh called on President U Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 March, where they held cordial discussions on promoting and strengthening mutual relationships and cooperation in agriculture, livestock, trade and investment, communication and transport sectors. The delegation was also received by Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin.¹⁶

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets Canadian Foreign Minister and guests -

http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM_2012-03-09.pdf (NLM) 9 March 2012 (p. 2) /

Canadian Foreign Minister calls on Union Foreign Minister -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 March 2012 (p. 2)

¹³ Canada FM commends govt, calls for free, fair by-elections -

<http://www.mmtimes.com/2012/news/618/news61813.html> (Myanmar Times) March 12 - 18, 2012

¹⁴ UEC Chairman meets adviser to Head of EU Foreign Affairs and Security -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 March 2012 (p. 2)

¹⁵ U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, receives Malaysian Foreign Affairs Minister and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 March 2012 (p. 1) /

Union Foreign Minister receives goodwill Malaysian delegation led by Foreign Affairs Minister -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 March 2012 (p. 2)

¹⁶ President U Thein Sein receives Vietnamese Foreign Affairs Minister and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 March 2012 (p. 1) /

Union Foreign Affairs Minister receives Vietnamese Foreign Affairs Minister -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 March 2012 (p. 2)

BELGIAN FLEMISH MINISTER-PRESIDENT MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT

Vice-President Sai Mauk Kham received Minister-President Kris Peeters of Flemish Government of Belgium on 9 March, where they held frank discussions on the bilateral relationship, the strengthening of friendly ties as well as cooperation matters between the two countries. Those present included Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing, Minister for Health Dr Pe Thet Khin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Myo Myint and departmental heads. Peeters also met the Deputy Minister for Education U Aye Kyu and discussed matters on promoting educational cooperation.¹⁷

LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER THURA SHWE MANN VISITS CHINA

At the invitation of Chairman of the Standing Committee of the China National People's Congress (NPC), Wu Bangguo, Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann led a parliamentary delegation on a five-day official visit to China, arriving in Kunming on 23 February. He met several Chinese leaders during the visit including Chairman Wu Bangguo, NPC Vice-Chairman Lu Kongxiang, Chinese Political Consultative Conference Chairman Jia Qinglin, Politburo member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CCCP) Li Yuanchao and Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Chief General Staff General Chen Bingde. Thura Shwe Mann stated that his visit was to promote bilateral relations between China and Burma and cooperation between the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the Chinese Communist Party (CPP). He also emphasized the importance of bilateral economic cooperation in promoting and strengthening ties between the two countries and that the recent Myitsone dam issue should not be allowed to hinder other on-going projects inside Burma. The Chinese leaders reiterated that Sino-Burma relations were based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistences and that a multifaceted strategic cooperation had been established between the two countries to further enhance existing relations. Furthermore, a crucial factor in bilateral relations depended on the need for rule of law, peace and stability on the Sino-Burmese border areas and only then would it be mutually beneficial. The new Burmese government has seen success in its efforts for ensuring national reconsolidation in the country and China respects Burma's sovereignty and believes that the government will be able to address its internal matters in a credible manner. During the meeting with the PLA Chief General Chen Bingde, both sides also expressed wishes to continue efforts in the development of the cooperative ties between the two countries and their armed forces.¹⁸

¹⁷ Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham receives Minister-President of Flemish Government of Belgium -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 March 2012 (p. 16) /

Dy Education Minister receives Minister-President of the Flemish Government of Belgium -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 March 2012 (p. 2)

¹⁸ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann arrives in Beijing, PRC, on goodwill visit -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 February 2012 (p. 10) /

Arrangements are necessary for the leaders of the two countries so as to further strengthen the bilateral ties (Thura U Shwe Mann) / The move towards comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations was indeed turning a new chapter (Mr Wu Bangguo) -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 February 2012 (p. 16 & 9) /

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker holds talks with PRC National People's Congress Vice-Chairman -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 February 2012 (p. 8)

Myanmar would promote existing friendship and cooperation with China. (Thura U Shwe Mann) / Despite changes in global politics, Sino-Myanmar ties have never changed. (Mr Jia Qinglin) -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 February 2012 (p. 1 & 8) /

Myanmar will continue to implement the system commensurate with its own situation. (Thura U Shwe Mann) / There are many differences among nations so that there will be external interference if the country adopts democratic system of other countries. (Mr Li Yuanchao) -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 February 2012 (p. 16 & 9) /

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker calls on Chief of Chinese PLA General Staff General Chen Bingde -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 February 2012 (p. 7)

BURMESE PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKERS MEET AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint received the National League for Democracy (NLD) Chairperson Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Pyithu Building in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 March. They discussed matters of Hluttaw affairs and other issues of national interest, and Suu Kyi also observed the 12th day regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw.¹⁹

BURMA HOSTS 18th ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS INFORMAL MEETING

The 18th ASEAN Economic Ministers Informal Meeting was held in Nay Pyi Taw from 25-26 February. Economics ministers from ASEAN nations, economics experts and delegations from ASEAN countries led by the ASEAN Secretary-General, representatives from embassies of ASEAN nations in Burma and officials of the ASEAN Secretariat attended the meeting. Cambodian Commerce Minister Cham Prasidh chaired the meeting, where the participants cordially discussed challenges and weaknesses for forming an ASEAN economic community by 2015 and exchanged views on which tasks would be completed by 2012. They also discussed matters related to cooperation between ASEAN nations to become a ASEAN economic community and timely completion of trade, services, investment and private sectors and more cooperation between the countries, promoting cooperation between ASEAN and its dialogue partners and matters related to implementation of the ASEAN framework for economic cooperation in the region. ASEAN's economic officials also held a preliminary meeting from 24-25 February, where they exchanged views on cooperation between ASEAN countries and the progress of the cooperation between ASEAN and its dialogue partners.²⁰

ASEAN Secretary-General Surin and the visiting ministers and also met with President U Thein Sein on 26 February to discuss the promotion of economic ties among the ASEAN member countries.²¹

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 3rd regular session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw continued for the 8th day at Pyithu Hluttaw Hall and was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann (USDP) and 351 MPs. During the session, the actions of the Hluttaw were put on record, 8 questions were raised and answered and 2 new proposals submitted. The key issues were:

- The Hluttaw **put on record the official goodwill visit of Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann to the People's Republic of China from 22 to 26 February 2012**
- Pyithu Hluttaw Economic and Trade Development Committee Chairman U Maung Maung Thein submitted the proposal on **“Urging to cease procedures asking for temporary vehicles registration fees of authorized vehicle import companies and organizations including Directorate of Road Administration like unlicensed vehicles’ fines and to review it in accord with the law”**. The Hluttaw decided that before submitting the proposal to the Hluttaw directly, the Pyithu Hluttaw Committee was to continue to coordinate respective ministry and organizations.

¹⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives NLD Chairperson - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 March 2012 (p. 2) / Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives NLD Chairperson - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 March 2012 (p. 9)

²⁰ ASEAN Economic Ministers' 18th informal meeting held - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 February 2012 (p. 10)

²¹ President U Thein Sein receives ASEAN economic ministers and ASEAN Secretary-General - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 February 2012 (p. 1)

- Judicial and Legal Affairs Committee Chairman Thura U Aung Ko (USDP) submitted a proposal “**to amend The Arbitration (Protocol and Convention) Act (Act No.VI, 1937) (19th January, 1937).”** The date for discussing U Aung Ko’s proposal would be announced at a later date.²²

During the 9th day session, Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and 354 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives attended, and a message of condolence was put on record, 2 bills were submitted and 1 bill approved. The key issues were:

- **Major Commodity and Service Bill and Disabled and Deceased or Fallen Tatmadawmen’s (Defense Services) Family Aid Bill** were submitted
- **the Union Election Bill was approved**²³

During the 10th day session, 8 questions were replied to, 1 proposal was discussed, 3 new proposals were submitted and discussed and 1 bill was introduced. The key issues were:

- U Than Tun of Depeyin Constituency (USDP) **seconded the proposal to amend The Arbitration (Protocol and Convention) Act (Act No. VI, 1937) (19th January, 1939) and the Arbitration Act 1944 (Act No. IV, 1944) (1st March, 1946)** submitted by the Judicial and Legal Affairs Committee on 29 February, citing that those laws were enacted before independence, and calling for amendments to them so as to be in line with internationally practiced provisions.
 - Deputy Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo replied that arbitration is a method used to settle the arguments between the partners of business deals and unlike litigation, it is a way of settling the dispute with the help of arbitrators chosen by the both arguing sides. It is found that arbitration has been used since the time of Burmese monarchs.
 - Nowadays, there are three ways to go arbitration-free arbitration, court-supported arbitration, and allowing the arguing sides to choose registered arbitrators from arbitration centres.
 - The Arbitration Act 1944 was promulgated to assign arbitrators to settle the disputes between two sides either person or company off the court, matters related to death of a party and official representation of him, authority of arbitrators, dismissal of arbitrators, confirmation of the verdict of the arbitrators, change to the verdict, validation of the verdict at the related court in case of failure to follow the arbitrators’ verdict, and appeals.
 - Of those two existing laws, The Arbitration Act 1944 is no more compatible with developments of the current global commercial laws but is still a domestic law applicable for disputes between national investors.
 - That the arguing sides can go arbitration as they both desire is the basic of the arbitration and thus The Arbitration Act 1944 should not be rewritten but should remain a valid law with necessary amendments and Arbitration and Convention Act (Act No. VI/1937) should continue so that disputes between a Geneva Convention member and Burma can be settled in accordance with the Geneva Convention.
 - The Deputy Attorney-General seconded the proposal to keep The Arbitration Act 1944 in force after making necessary amendments and to join the New York Convention.²⁴

²² Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for eighth day / Myanmar delegation’s visit to China put on record, eight questions answered, two new proposals submitted -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 March 2012 (p.16 & 8)

²³ Pyithu Hluttaw regular session continues for ninth day / Condolence recorded, two bills submitted, one bill approved - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 March 2012 (p. 16)

At the 11th day session, Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann (USDP) and 338 MPs attended, 8 questions were raised, 2 new proposals submitted and discussed and 2 bills approved. The key issue was:

- The Judiciary and Legal Affairs Committee Chairman Thura U Aung Ko (USDP) submitted a proposal **to abolish the Code of Criminal Procedure and Penal Code**
 - Judge U Mya Thein of the Supreme Court of the Union replied that **the bill amended the code of criminal procedure had been drafted in accordance with the constitution and the draft included the proposals submitted by the Pyithu Hluttaw Judiciary and Legal Affairs Committee. The draft would be sent to the Attorney-General's Office of the Union to be able to promulgate as a law.**²⁵

During the 12th day session, 8 questions were raised and one report was submitted. The key issues were:

- Dr Nay Lin of Seikkan Constituency (USDP) asked whether there is **plan to handle improvement in treatment provided by private specialist hospitals and clinics officially permitted by the Ministry of Health in accord with Private Health Industry Law.**
 - Union Minister for Health Dr Pe Thet Khin replied that in accord with health policy of the government, the development of private health industry is being implemented under Private Health Industry Law prescribed with a view to developing private health industry, encouraging private health industry to fulfill their quota in national health system, using resources of private sector effectively in providing healthcare to the public, offering the public with more options for healthcare, providing high-quality healthcare to the public at reasonable price and ensuring accountability.
 - Private hospitals are being urged to employ more doctors/specialists, to improve the capacity of nurses and the emergence of private health entrepreneurs' association to form united public healthcare system and help each others.
 - The ministry has assigned works to be continuously implemented by the association and in addition to the above-mentioned efforts, others will also be included in the draft of Private Health Industry Bylaw and Rules and Regulations which will meet international standards.
- U Tun Thein (a) U Tun Tun of Mansi Constituency (USDP) asked if **the government had any plans to carry out reconstruction work for the resettlement of local people who fled their region due to clashes in Kachin State.**
 - Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Phone Swe said that 19,103 people have moved temporarily to 65 rescue camps in 12 townships for security reasons.
 - They are now being rendered assistance by government departments, the Kachin State government, public well-wishers, UN agencies and INGOs.
 - Up to 6 March 2012, cash and aids worth K 2652.689 million were had been provided, measures taken for the education and healthcare of the children of those families.

²⁴ Pyithu Hluttaw continues 10th day meeting / Eight questions replied, one proposal discussed, three new proposals submitted and discussed, one bill introduced -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 March 2012 (p.8 & 9)

²⁵ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 11th day / Eight questions replied, two new proposals submitted and discussed, two bills approved -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 March 2012 (p.16, 8 & 9)

- When peace prevails, those who want to resettle in their native places will be allowed to do so with re-establishment of their businesses and new projects will be undertaken for those who want to settle in new places.
 - The Deputy Minister for Border Affairs and Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement had visited the affected regions and carried out resettlement and rehabilitation tasks.
 - In so doing, the Union government and the State government as well as UN agencies, NGOs, INGOs and public well-wishers are cooperating with each other.
- Bill Committee Chairman, U T Khun Myat (USDP) submitted the committee's report regarding **the Foreign Investment Bill** sent by the Amyotha Hluttaw.²⁶

During the 13th day session, Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann (USDP) and 341 representatives attended, 5 questions were raised and replied and 1 bill was approved.²⁷

At the 14th day session 8 questions were answered and 1 bill was submitted. The Bill Committee Chairman U T Khun Myat **submitted the committee's report on the Society Security Bill.**²⁸

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 8th day of the 3rd regular session of the first Amyotha Hluttaw continued at the Amyotha Hluttaw Hall and was attended by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and 204 Amyotha Hluttaw representatives. 8 questions were raised and answered, 1 report was submitted and sought approval for, 4 bills were discussed and 2 new proposals were submitted. The key issues were:

- The **Labour Dispute Settlement Bill**, the **Vacant Land, Fallow Land and Virgin Land Managment Bill**, the **Environmental Bill** and the **Social Welfare Bill** were discussed.²⁹

At the 9th day session, the key issues were:

- The proposal submitted by U Nyan Lin of Region Constituency No.3 (USDP) **“urging the Union government to add political subject at arts and science universities under the Ministry of Education as additional subjects”** was discussed by Dr Tin Shwe of Yangon Region Constituency No.6 (USDP), Daw Khin Waing Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No.1 (NDF), U Hmat Gyi of Mandalay Region Constituency No.9, Dr Myint Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No.8 (USDP), U Htay Yal of Kayah State Constituency No.7, U Than Swe of Taninthayi Region Constituency No.2 (USDP), U Win Maung of Mandalay Region Constituency No.2 (USDP), U Zone Hlal Htan of Chin State Constituency No.2 (CPP) and U Aung Nyein of Magway Region Constituency No.2 (USDP). **The proposal was put on record and approved.**³⁰

At the 10th day session, Speaker U Khin Aung Myint (USDP) and 191 representatives attended, 1 bill was approved, 1 proposal discussed and recorded and 1 new proposal submitted. The key issues were:

²⁶ Third regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 12th day. Eight questions raised, one report submitted - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 March 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

²⁷ Third regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 13th Day. Five questions answered, one bill approved - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 March 2012 (p.16 & 8)

²⁸ Third regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 14th day. Eight questions raised, one bill submitted - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 March 2012 (p.16 & 8)

²⁹ Eighth day third regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues / Donation to Amyotha Hluttaw Library recorded, eight questions answered, one report approved, four bills discussed, three new proposals submitted - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 March 2012 (p. 16, 8, 9 & 10)

³⁰ Third regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for ninth day - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 March 2012 (p. 8)

- Bill Committee member U Myint Tun clarified the report of the bill committee regarding the discussion of the representatives over the **Foreign Investment Bill - the Hluttaw approved the Bill paragraph by paragraph**
- Joint-Secretary of the Myanmar Investment Commission Deputy Minister for Rail Transportation Thura U Thaug Lwin submitted a **proposal to approve the Foreign Investment Bill and the Hluttaw approved the amended bill.**
- U Bo Yal of Kayah State Constituency-3 (USDP) submitted the proposal on **“urging the Union Government to prioritize the opening of a new border trade camp in Kayah State for regional development”**. The Hluttaw agreed to accept and discuss the proposal.³¹

During the 11th day session 5 questions were raised and answered, 1 bill submitted, 1 proposal discussed, put on record and 1 proposal and approved and 1 new proposal submitted. The key issues were:

- U Khin Maung Yi of Ayeyawady Region Constituency No. 6 (USDP) asked about **extending the repayment period of agricultural loans while farmers are fetching lower prices and facing losses by climate change by one month and to keep 10% of the agricultural loan in savings account.**
- U Myo Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency No.6 (USDP) proposed **“the Union government to effectively irrigate for agricultural development”**. The Hluttaw decided to discuss the proposal and announced for registration to discuss it.³²

During the 12th day session, 10 questions were answered, 1 bill approved, 1 bill submitted, 1 proposal discussed and approved and 1 new proposal submitted. The key issues were:

- The Hluttaw discussed **the Labour Dispute Arbitration Bill and approved it.**
- U Myint Tun of Bago Region Constituency No. 10 (USDP) submitted a proposal **urging the Union government to contribute towards clean government and good governance by applying good sample systems of some foreign countries so that the government departments and State service personnel gain more trusts and confidences of the people.**
 - U Nyunt Tin of Yangon Region Constituency No. 2 (USDP) supported the proposal. The Hluttaw **decided to discuss the proposal and announced to enlist the Hluttaw representatives wishing to participate in discussions.**³³

At the 13th day session 10 questions were raised and answered, 1 report read, 1 proposal discussed and approved and 3 new proposals submitted. The key issue was:

- Dr Aye Maung of Rakhine State Constituency-1 (RNDP) submitted a **proposal urging the Union government to make sure that the duties, authority and rights, facilities and salary rates of civil servants meet with the international, regional and ASEAN standards by abolishing some departmental organizations, reducing and extending the size of some**

³¹ Third regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 10th day. One bill approved, one proposal discussed and recorded and one new proposal submitted - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 March 2012 (p. 16 & 8)

³² Third regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 11th day / Five questions answered, one bill submitted, one proposal discussed, put on record, one proposal approved, one new proposal submitted - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 March 2012 (p. 10 & 11)

³³ Amyotha Hluttaw session continues for 12th day / Ten questions answered, one bill approved, one bill submitted, one proposal approved, one new proposal submitted - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 March 2012 (p. 16, 9 & 10)

organizations and forming some organizations. The Hluttaw agreed to discuss it and announced to enlist representatives for discussion.³⁴

At 14th day session 9 questions were raised and answered, 1 bill was submitted, 2 proposals were discussed, 1 proposal was postponed and 1 proposal approved. The key issues were:

- Daw Khin Waing Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No. 1 (NDF) asked **“whether there is plan to draft separate law for Myanmar Police Force”**. The Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko responded that based on developments of the country, orders and directives will be issued if and when necessary.
- U Htay Win (a) U Zayad Rarman of Rakhine State Constituency No. 7 (USDP) asked about **“helping citizens in Buthidaung and Maungtau Townships in Rakhine State to neutralize as Myanmar citizens under principle of the constitution as they are facing social, travel, economic and health difficulties”** and **“spoiling 250 acres of farmland by channeling saltwater to fish and prawn ponds in Ngakhuya village in Maungtau Township”**. The Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko responded:
 - Maungtau district which shares 152-milelong border with other countries and many of those residing there are Bengalis.
 - Communications and illegal marriages have taken place in the past, and citizens of the other countries have entered Myanmar through this process.
 - During the Nagar-min Operation in 1978-79, aimed at collecting the official population and data of the region, those who could not stand the examination fled to the other country. Similarly also during the Hintha project, over 180,000 persons were re-accepted under agreement of the two countries. Over 230,000 persons were reaccepted till July, 2005, as those who fled to the other country for various reasons in 1990-1991 were reaccepted since 22-9-1992 under the agreement of the two countries.
 - Thus, it is important to scrutinize and prevent such illegal activities, and as such Bengali nationals residing in Maungtau District are supervised to take Immigration Form-4 for traveling to other regions and states with the aim of scrutinizing them whether they are actually residing in the nation or not and preventing the infiltration of extremist terrorists into Burma under the law according to the State security and national cause;
 - At present, traveling is being scrutinized to be easier than that of the past.
 - With regard to issuance of the citizenship scrutiny cards, a citizen can be classified either as an inborn citizen or a citizen prescribed by the law. According to the Myanmar Citizenship Law 1982, any person may apply firm evidences showing residence of forefathers as original citizens in Burma so as to take identity card among three types of citizens as the citizen, the associate citizen and the naturalized citizen. Any person has responsibility to initially submit application for taking one type of card.
 - With regard to wedding, as the Bengali nationals residing in Maungtau District are similar to language, physical characters and religion of those from other country, it is an act of identifying them not to wrongfully wed those of other countries and scrutinizing them whether they are really residing in the region, holding official household registration and reaching 18 years or not. Thus, departments concerned systematically cooperate with them for carrying out legal wedding. In the education sector, those in

³⁴ Third regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 13th Day. Ten questions raised, one report read out, one proposal approved and three new proposals submitted - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 March 2012 (p.16, 10 & 11)

conformity with prescribed rules have the chance to attend any university/college, and likewise, any person in conformity with education entrance selection system of the respective ministries can enjoy the right of learning education at vocational universities.

- In accord with Section 348 of the Constitution, arrangements have been made for enabling the people of Maungtaw District to enjoy rights in equal term similar to those of entire country.
 - With regard to the question to accept the administration in the framework of the 2008 Constitution, any person residing in Burma must abide by the existing laws, rules, procedures, orders and directives before emergence of the Constitution. As Maungtaw District is a border area, the administration of Maungtaw District is legally contributing towards security and prevalence of law and order for the sake of the people so as to safeguard the sovereignty of the State.
- Dr Tin Shwe of Yangon Region constituency No 6 (NDF) asked **the procedure being practiced by the ministry concerned on NGO registration**. The Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko responded:
- NGOs, INGOs and private organizations had signed MoUs with the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development (NPED) and with ministries concerned to work in the country and to date, 278 NGOs had been permitted of which 112 were township-level organizations and they were also rendering assistance to the members of the organizations and 74 had been taking measures for education, health and environmental conservations sectors while 92 organizations were providing assistance to orphans, welfare of pensioners and other services.
 - From a total of 53 INGOs from foreign countries, 6 organizations had been permitted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and of the remaining 47 organizations, 38 had applied at the Ministry of NPED for registration.
 - The coordination and cooperation of the departments concerned and INGOs were aimed at serving to promote and protect the interests of the country.
 - Currently, INGO is required to submit the Project Proposal, Basic Agreement and MoU drafts to Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and to ministries concerned and eventually sign the final agreement after being approved by the authorities concerned.
 - NGOs and INGOs are allowed to open their offices after registration, and need to seek agreements from the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and ministries concerned to appoint foreigners as well as the appointment local employees in the respective organizations.
 - In order for the works of projects to run smoothly, a committee for coordination with central-level organizations headed by Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development and Union Ministers for Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs hold a regular meeting with INGOs every three months.
 - INGOs are required to send their reports to the Ministry of NPED every 3 months.³⁵

At the 15th day session 10 questions were replied to, 1 bill approved and 2 proposals were discussed. The key issues were:

³⁵ Third regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 14th day / Nine questions answered, one bill submitted, two proposals discussed, one proposal postponed, one proposal approved - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-14.pdf> (p.16, 9 & 10)

- Dr. Tin Shwe from Yangon Region Constituency No.6 (NDF) asked “**if there is any plan to take national census within 2012 after the by elections**”.
 - Union Minister for Immigration and Population U Khin Yi replied that he held the same view that the population of a country is directly related with environmental conservation.
 - There is no plan to take national census within 2012 after the by-elections.
 - The main reason why not being able to make land surveys for census in 2012 is because of out of experience for about 30 years as the last national census was taken in 1983 and also of increased steps in preparatory works due to modern techniques.
 - Although it cannot be made in 2012 but will be made in 2014;
- A Bill Committee Member read the report of the committee on Amyotha Hluttaw Bill, and committee member Dr. Myat Nyana Soe (NDF) supported it. As the Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw sought the approval of the Hluttaw for the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill, the Hluttaw approved it.
- Dr. Khin Shwe of Yangon Region Constituency No 9 (USDP), U Mahn Kan Nyunt of Kayin State Constituency No 2 (USDP), U Hla Swe of Magway Region Constituency No 12 (USDP), Daw Khin Waing Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No 1 (NDF), U Zon Hle Htan of Chin State Constituency No 2 (CPP) and U Swe Aung of Yangon Region Constituency No 12 (USDP) discussed the proposal **urging the Union government to standardize the responsibility, authority, entitlement, insignia and salary rates of the State service personnel to be on a par with international standards and regional and ASEAN standards by systematically abolishing, downsizing, extending and reorganizing some service organizations** submitted by Dr. Aye Maung of Rakhine State Constituency No 1 (RNDP).³⁶

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw) Sessions

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continued its 16th day session at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Hall , which was attended by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and 561 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives. The session put 1 message on record and discussed 1 bill.

- The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker read the message on the **reshuffle of ministers at Mandalay Region Government sent by the President**. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw put the re-assignments of U Phone Zaw Han as Minister for Finance and Revenue and U Aung Maung as Minister for Development Affairs at Mandalay Region Government on record.
- The main focus of the discussions was on **the National Planning Bill**.³⁷

At the 17th day session:

- **President U Thein Sein addressed the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in commemoration of first anniversary of assumption of duty under Section 210 of the constitution**. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw put the address of the President on record.
- U Win Oo of Yebyu Constituency (USDP), U Aye Mauk of Mahlaing Constituency (USDP), U Aung Thein Lin of South Okkalapa Constituency (USDP), U Khet Htein Nam of Kachin State

³⁶ Third regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 15th day / Ten questions replied, one bill approved, two proposals discussed and put on record -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 March 2012 (p.16, 9 & 10)

³⁷ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session continues for 16th day / One message put on record, one bill discussed -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 February 2012 (p. 6 & 7)

Constituency No.1 (UDPKS), U Kyaw Ni Naing of Laukkai Constituency (USDP), Dr Nay Lin of Seikkan Constituency (USDP) discussed **National Plan Bill for the 2012-2013 fiscal year**.³⁸

At the 18th day session a proposal on condolence made and 2 bills were discussed and approved.

- **10 Union Ministers gave clarifications on the principles and basic discussions made by Hluttaw representatives regarding the National Planning Bill for the 2012- 2013 fiscal year.**³⁹

At the 19th day session, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint (USDP), Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann (USDP) and 548 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives attended, 1 proposal was discussed and 3 new proposals were submitted.

- U Zaw Myint Pe of Mandalay Region Constituency No. 5 (USDP) submitted a proposal urging the Union government **to amend the Social Security Board of the Ministry of Labour as an economic organization of the Union government.**

As the social security fund was paid into the combined account of the Union from 1963 to January 2012:

- o Dr Myint Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No. 8 (USDP) submitted a proposal **urging the Union government to refund the remaining money to the Social Security Board**
- o U Myint Tun of Bago Region Constituency No. 10 (USDP) submitted a proposal urging the Union government **that as savings or input savings that have been paid to the State for over 50 years are own money of the respective people. Thus, the savings are to be refunded to respective farmers. Moreover, Section 5/1953 of Agricultural Bank Law should be cancelled and farmers are to be allowed to save money of their own accord.**⁴⁰

At the 20th day session:

- **MPs submitted proposals to amend 2012-2013 fiscal year National Planning Bill, and Union ministers discussed and answered questions regarding the bill. After which approval was sought from parliament to approve the amendments.**⁴¹

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

FORMER NLD MEMBER TO RUN AGAINST PARTY

Residents of Meiktila are likely to be spoilt for choice in the 1 April by-elections with a former member of the National League of Democracy (NLD), Daw Myint Myint Aye, registering as an independent candidate. A long-time Meiktila resident, the 54-year-old was a member of the NLD since 1989 but cut ties with the party after it nominated a senior member from Yangon, U Win Htein, as its candidate for the Pyithu Hluttaw seat of Meiktila. The constituency had more than 195,000 registered voters in November 2010 and was won by U Thein Aung of the USDP with about 74% of all eligible votes. He was later elevated by the Union Government as Deputy Minister for Industry 1. Daw Myint Myint Aye responded to the snub by filing an application to the election commission to

³⁸ Third regular session of first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continues for 17th day -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 March 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

³⁹ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session continues for 18th day / Union Ministers make clarifications, proposal on condolence made, two bills discussed and approved -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 March 2012 (p. 16, 10 & 11)

⁴⁰ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session continues for 19th day / One proposal discussed, three new proposals submitted -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 March 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

⁴¹ 20th day session of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continues. Amendments made to National Planning Bill -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-03-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 March 2012 (p. 16 & 8)

run as an independent and was approved on 13 February. “I have a large number of supporters in Meiktila. I wanted to go into politics but the NLD didn’t choose me as its representative so I decided to try and contest as independent candidate instead,” she said.⁴²

ETHNIC NEWS JOURNAL THE UNITY TO LAUNCH IN MARCH

A journal focusing on news from the country’s ethnic-dominated regions is set to launch in March, several months later than originally planned. According to its editor-in-chief Ko Pyo Wai Lin “The Unity” was initially expected to hit news-stands in November last year, but it has taken eight months for the group’s publishing licence to be approved. He said that the name of the new publication also had to be changed from The Union, which was already registered by the Union Democratic Party. “We only changed the name. We will report politics and other ethnic news as we originally planned.” The 36-page journal will be published each Friday and is owned by three ethnic nationals, including U Sai Hla Kyaw, the General-Secretary of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party and Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Langkho in Southern Shan State. Ko Pyo Wai said that most journals were focused on events in Bamar-dominated areas and gave less space to ethnic news.⁴³

88 GENERATION CALLS FOR PEACE CONFERENCE

The 88 Generation group has called for a Panglong-style Peace Conference to permanently end political conflict between the government and armed ethnic groups. The group released a four-point statement following its 23 to 25 February trip to Kachin State, during which it met people displaced by fighting in the region as well as political, religious, social and business leaders. According to member Ko Mya Aye, a national peace conference was needed to guarantee equal rights for all ethnic groups. “Our ethnic brothers don’t think there have been any changes in Myanmar because there is war all the time. They think that they do not enjoy any rights,” he said. “We have heard the government has said it will hold a conference soon in Nay Pyi Taw like Panglong. If we want to end these problems [with refugees], we need to solve the political conflicts. If we want to solve these political conflicts, we need to urgently hold a conference with the participation of all parties.” He added that the conflict in Kachin State had significantly damaged national unity and needed to be halted as soon as possible. In the statement, titled *Echo of Myitkyina for Kachin Peace*⁴⁴, the group called for sufficient supplies to be distributed to refugee camps in Kachin State and for the government to act immediately to bring peace to the region. “We deeply wish for peace discussions to be held as soon as possible with the aim of getting real peace among all nationals, to stop civil war and to shape a united nation with freedom, fairness and equality,” the statement said. Ko Pyone Cho, another 88 Generation member, said the group had listened to the “wishes and voices” of a wide cross-section of Kachin society and that “after adding all of these wishes and voices, we have reached a common agreement based on a desire for peace.”⁴⁵

⁴² In Meiktila, former NLD member to run against old party -

<http://www.mmmtimes.com/2012/news/616/news61610.html> (Myanmar Times) February 27 - March 4, 2012

⁴³ Ethnic news journal to launch in March -

<http://www.mmmtimes.com/2012/news/617/news61717.html> (Myanmar Times) March 5 - 11, 2012

⁴⁴ 88 Student Statement for kachin-“Myitkyina Echo for Peace in Kachin State”

<http://democracyforburma.wordpress.com/2012/02/28/88-student-statement-for-kachin-myitkyina-echo-for-peace-in-kachin-state/> (Democracy for Burma) 28 February 2012

⁴⁵ 88 Generation calls for peace conference -

<http://www.mmmtimes.com/2012/news/617/news61710.html> (Myanmar Times) March 5 -11, 2012

ANALYSIS

Cease-fire agreements at the state-level have been reached with the Mon and Kayinni armed groups, while the recent peace talks with the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) ended with an impasse. That being said, it would seem that years of continued fighting and (most importantly) the lack of trust between the two sides have become the main obstacles of the crisis. The government, while keen to end years of fighting, on one hand, has also been reinforcing its position in the affected areas. Such actions will not be seen as a friendly gesture nor welcomed if peace talks are to be achieved. No doubt, the recent round of peace talks will surely have served as a basis on which to further pursue negotiations in ending the conflict in northern Burma.

While the Burma's internal affairs have failed to deliver progress or success, the government has managed to attract continued visits from Canada, New Zealand, Malaysia and Belgium. A delegation from the European Parliament has visited, as has the US Special Envoy. Therefore, it would seem that the democratic changes being undertaken by President U Thein Sein are being welcomed, to a certain extent, by the international community-at-large.

The main issue now is the upcoming by-elections scheduled for 1 April. The outside world and observers alike will surely monitor the results of the by-elections as a tool to measure the present state of affairs and the sincerity of the Nay Pyi Taw administration as it embarks on implementing democratic reforms. Burma will soon be ushering in its New Year "Thingyan" on 17 April and the hope that the New Year will bring peace and prosperity. The time is now opportune for President U Thein Sein to transform his inaugural address into reality and take the country onto the path of democracy.

Appendix A:

**Agreements between
the State-Level and Union-Level Peace-Making Groups
and
the New Mon State Party (NMSP)**

25 February 2012

State-Level Agreement

The 5-points of the peace agreement signed between the State-Level Peace-Making Group and NMSP Peace-Making Group are:

1. Ceasefire by both sides
2. Formation of Union-Level Peace-Making group and delegation for dialogue officially and negotiation of date, time and venue for talks
3. Opening of communication office (with no arm) at an appropriate site agreed by both sides
4. Negotiation will be made for holding arms beyond the areas agreed by both sides
5. Settlement at the sites agreed by both sides.

Union-Level Agreement

The 4-points of the peace agreement signed between the Union-Level Peace-Making Group and NMSP Peace-Making Group are:

1. To observe ceasefire on nation-wide basis, especially to end up armed conflicts causing in areas of national races
2. To start political dialogue within at most 45 days of ceasefire

Allowing participation of contributors as observers

- a) To start political dialogue between representatives of armed national races organizations and representatives of the government after ceasefire of all armed national races organizations. In case ceasefire is not secured with all the organizations till December 2012, to start the political dialogue between representatives of the ceasefire organizations and representatives of the government
 - b) To continue talks on national reconciliation based on political compromises with participation of representatives of domestic national political parties and democratic forces
 - c) To initiate procedures for prompt implementation of agreement reached in the above-mentioned dialogue
3. To work for stability and development of education, health and social sectors of the region in coordination with respective national races armed organizations and the government as the ceasefire comes into effect
 4. **General clauses:** In periods of ceasefire and political dialogue,
 - a) To have the right to communicate with the public and help each others;
 - b) To have the right to communicate with domestic political parties;
 - c) To have the right to communicate with news agencies and media. To inform the public of outcomes of political dialogue as required;
 - d) To conduct negotiation in advance in communicating with the foreign diplomats;
 - e) To not extend military strength in Mon State and related areas in period of ceasefire;
 - f) To release all political prisoners remaining in the prisons and to free comrades of New Mon State Party in prisons with sympathy as well.
 - g) To avoid forced labour by both sides, apart from volunteers. To seek solution for cases of people's lands through coordination.

(Remark: If there is any other fact in addition to 10 abovementioned clauses, they will be put forward.)⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Mon group inks peace deal with government - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-02-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 February 2012 (p. 16 & 10)