
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 30

OFFICIAL MEDIA

TIMOR-LESTE PM AND PARTY ARRIVES IN MYANMAR

A goodwill delegation led by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Security of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão and party arrived on 11 September to begin their official visit to Myanmar. President Thein Sein and Premier Gusmão discussed further strengthening of bilateral relations and cooperation, prospects of promotion in energy, agriculture and industry sectors, and matters related to cooperation in ASEAN region. The two leaders also exchanged views on experience in solving conflicts of Myanmar and Timor-Leste, experience in nation-building endeavours and democracy transition.¹

MYANMAR GLOBAL INVESTMENT FORUM COMMENCES

The Myanmar Global Investment Forum, jointly organized by Myanmar Investment Commission and Euro-money Conferences, kicked off in Yangon on 10 September. The two-day Forum was opened by President Thein Sein and attended by high-profile government officials and has attracted 850 participants from 35 countries. In addressing the meeting, Thein Sein said the ongoing Myanmar Global Investment Forum would contribute to the economic development of the country and that the forum would provide an opportunity as Myanmar is implementing democratic reforms. The Myanmar President also met Vice-President of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Mr Xiaoyu Zhao and party on the sideline of the Forum.²

SHWE MANN MEETS LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN YANGON AND TANINTHARYI REGIONS

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Thura Shwe Mann met officials from organizations for rule of law in Kamayut Township and also met separately with entrepreneurs of livestock, fisheries and business organizations in Hline Township on 8 September. In his meetings, the Speaker stressed the need for abidance of law and that in the absence of the rule of law peace and stability could not be achieved. He also state that democracy could not be achieved by implementing political reforms alone, and that executive, economic and functional reforms also are also needed and should be carried out simultaneously. The speaker called on those present to express their concerns and stated that the discussions and suggestions would contribute towards the making of effective laws.

Similarly, Thura Shwe Mann also visited Tanintharyi Region in southern Myanmar and met MPs, department officials, towns-elders and locals from in Dawei, Kawthoung and Myeik townships from 11 to 12 September. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker called for all MPs in addressing the concerns raised by the public related to regional development, education, health, transport and power supply and to fulfil them accordingly. He urged those working in the media sector to abide and follow media ethics by covering accurate and reliable news in the interest of the country. He also highlighted that the country's development had fallen behind others due to the lack of unity, national

¹ Timor-Leste PM and party arrive in Nay Pyi Taw –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-12-red.pdf> (NLM) 12 September 2013 (p.1)/
Timor-Leste PM and party arrive in Nay Pyi Taw –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 September 2013 (p.1)
Myanmar-Timor-Leste to promote friendship, cooperation. President U Thein Sein and wife lay out red carpet for Timor-Leste PM and wife –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 September 2013 (p.1 & 8)

² Myanmar Global Investment Forum commences –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-11-red.pdf> (NLM) 11 September 2013 (p.1)/
President U Thein Sein receives delegates to 2nd Myanmar Global Investment Forum –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-11-red.pdf> (NLM) 11 September 2013 (p.1)

reconsolidation, the rule of law and peace. In conclusion, he urged those present to refrain from doing any acts that can harm national reconsolidation and national unity.³

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

ETHNIC CEASEFIRE DRAFT ACCEPTED ‘IN PRINCIPLE’

The 14-point draft nationwide ceasefire accord presented by the ethnic armed movements has in principle been accepted by the government’s technical team, according to Karen and Shan representatives who attended a two day meeting held between the Working Group for Ethnic Coordination (WGEC) and government formed Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) held in Chiangmai from 6 to 7 September.

The WGEC’s 19 point dialogue topics, which includes constitutional reforms, security reforms, economic reforms, judicial reforms, drug eradication IDP/refugee issues, labour issues, education and health standards and media issues, among others. The government’s chief negotiator Minister Aung Min however proposed that there should be only 9 and that too many topics could prolong the on-going peace process. As for concerns related to Transitional Arrangements, which will “enable EAGs (Ethnic Armed Groups) to operate during the transitional period of the peace process,” the WGEC has recommended that it be considered in the drafting of the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord.

The MPC and the joint KNU-RCSS technical team have agreed to meet again to discuss and draft the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord. The draft upon completion is expected to be circulated and discussed among the ethnic armed movements, whose decisions will be crucial for the successful convening of the signing ceremony planned for late October.

The 14 points proposed by the WGEC include the following:

- Nationwide ceasefire
- Establishment of Military Code of Conduct (COC)
- Establishment of Joint Ceasefire Committee (JCC)
- Establishment of Joint Peace Secretariat (JPS)
- Location of armed contingents
- Freedom of movement
- Military cooperation
- Liaison offices
- Humanitarian issues
- Political prisoners
- Freedom of NGOs and INGOs
- Land issues
- Human Rights issues
- Legal status of armed groups

The government, in turn, has agreed to the following 4 points, according to the briefing:

³ Stability and peace could not prevail in the nation in the absence of the rule of law –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-08-red.pdf> (NLM) 8 September 2013 (p.1)/
Political reform only not enough for democratization –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-09-red.pdf> (NLM) 9 September 2013 (p.1)/
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker calls for covering accurate and reliable news in accord with media ethics –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-11-red.pdf> (NLM) 11 September 2013 (p.16)/
Staff need to be loyal to the State says Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-12-red.pdf> (NLM) 12 September 2013 (p.1)/
Speaker of Pyidaungsu, Pyithu Hluttaw meets local people in Myeik –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-09-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 September 2013 (p.16)

- Endorsement of the 14 state/region level and 19 union level agreements signed since 2011 with 14 armed groups
- A waiver on the Unlawful Association Act
- To hold negotiations on the framework for political dialogue
- To hold a “New Panglong” Union Conference

A time table was also proposed by the MPC (on 24 September):

- October 2013: Signing of Nationwide Ceasefire Accord
- November 2013-March 2014: Negotiations on Framework for Political Dialogue (“during which the COC will also be negotiated,” according to the MPC)
- April 2014-March 2015: Union Conference.⁴

NLD AND UNA TO REPORT ON AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION

Ethnic parties have announced that a report to amend the 2008 Constitution will be prepared by the National League of Democracy (NLD) together with United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) by November, after a meeting on 7 September. “We shall prepare a report and release it at the Parliament and the public. I cannot confirm whether the report will propose to draft a new Constitution or just make amendments to the present one”, said NLD spokesman Nyan Win.

Discussions on amending the Constitution will be raised during weekly meetings between the NLD and the UNA. “We will need thorough discussion on what and how we should amend the Constitution. For now, we are here to reach an agreement to amend the Constitution with all the ethnic parties”, said Aye Thar Aung, Chairman of the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD), a UNA member party. The UNA formed a committee last month jointly with the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), formed by 11 ethnic armed groups. Colonel Khun Okka, the Co-Secretary (2) of the UNFC said that they will publicize the amended points in the law which is rewritten by the following recently formed Committee. “We will discuss re-drafting the law. The ethnic people prefer a new one rather than amendments”, continued Aye Thar Aung.

Pu Kam Lian, General Secretary of from the Zomi National Congress, said “in order to achieve peace, having a Constitution that treats all citizens equally, regardless of their ethnicity, is of primary importance. Then, we will be able to draft the Constitution with inputs from all the ethnic groups”. While invitations to 13 ethnic groups were sent, only the Kaman National Progressive Party, Chin Progressive Party, Zomi National Congress, Arakan League of Democracy and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy attended the meeting. The NLD has formed a 7 member committee on September 6, to amend the Constitution.⁵

USDP COMMITTEE BEGINS REVIEW OF ALL CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTS SINCE 1947

The ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party has begun making observations on all previous drafts of the Constitution—including the 2008 Constitution—as part of measures to amend necessary clauses prescribed in 2008, said Htay Oo, vice-chairman of the ruling party. The party has

⁴ Ethnic ceasefire draft accepted ‘in principle’ –

http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5581:ethnic-ceasefire-draft-accepted-in-principle&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 9 September 2013/

Govt team agrees with proposed principles for peace –

http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5584:govt-team-agrees-with-proposed-principles-for-peace&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 10 September 2013/

First draft for nationwide ceasefire ready for perusal –

http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5589:first-draft-for-nationwide-ceasefire-ready-for-perusal&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 13 September 2013

⁵ NLD and UNA to report on amendment of Constitution –

<http://mizzima.com/news-91481/prisoner-watch/10025-nld-and-una-to-report-on-amendment-of-constitution> (Mizzima) 9 September 2013

had several discussions on the contentious 2008 Constitution are applicable to the current situation in Myanmar. With the hope of providing better constitutional amendments, the parliament-formed Constitution Review Joint Committee will hold a paper-reading session, said Htay Oo. “We will place special emphasis on the constitutional amendments based on the paper-reading session. We need to study all clauses in the constitutions, starting from the 1947 version to the 2008 version. For this purpose, the CEC members are themselves observing the requirements,” said Htay Oo, adding that the majority would consider what to do next depending upon the outcome of the paper-reading session. The constitution review joint committee includes 109 members with proportional representation of MPs from both the Upper and Lower houses, political parties, military MPs and individuals and is expected to submit its findings to the Union Parliament before 31 December 2013.⁶

FIRST SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL POLICING STANDARDS HELD IN MYANMAR

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Myanmar Police Force launched a four-day seminar in Naypyitaw on international policing standards and the exercise of police powers. This is the first such seminar for police commanders that the ICRC has held in the country. Running from 10 to 13 September, the seminar brings together twenty three senior police officials including directors of departments plus regional, state and battalion commanders.

Speaking at the seminar, the ICRC’s representative to Myanmar, Jurg Montani said the ICRC was keen on developing a professional dialogue with senior commanders, sharing experiences and best practices. He also thanked the Myanmar Police Force for their excellent cooperation and for recognizing the significance of incorporating international policing standards into their working procedures and to further strengthen engagement with the force through more joint activities in the future.

Brigadier General Kyaw Kyaw Tun, the Deputy Union Minister of Home Affairs said, that the seminar would contribute in the efforts to further professionalizing its police force. And in doing so, it will provide all officers to understand and implement international standards, including in the management of public order situations and that this seminar is a step in the right direction. The four-day seminar will cover topics such as the use of force and firearms, public order management and crowd control practices, plus arrest, detention and search processes.⁷

GOVERNMENT AND ALP TALKS FAIL TO REACH AGREEMENT

The 4th round of talks between the government peace team and the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) held in Chiangmai on 9 September ended without reaching an agreement. Khaing Soe Naing Aung of the ALP said, “We got nothing from today’s discussion. In all of the previous meetings, we have expressed our demands. But they told us to wait until Rakhine State is stable and peaceful.” He said that in the three previous meetings with the government, ALP urged the government to hold union level peace talks, to open more liaison offices, implement development initiatives and the deployment of troops. An official from the Myanmar Peace Centre told local media that although no agreement had been reached, the ALP would need to have discussions with the technical team of

⁶ USDP committee begins review of all constitutional drafts since 1947 –
<http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/3388-usdp-committee-begins-review-of-all-constitutional-drafts-since-1947>
(Eleven News Media) 12 September 2013

⁷ Myanmar: First seminar on international policing standards –
<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2013/09-13-myanmar-seminar-police.htm> (ICRC) 12
September 2013

the Peace-making Work Committee ahead of union-level peace talks. The Rakhine-state-level ceasefire agreement between the ALP and the Rakhine State government was signed in April 2012.⁸

GOVERNMENT FORCES LAUNCHES MAJOR OFFENSIVES AGAINST KIA

Battles continue spread across Kachin and northern Shan State as the KIO and Myanmar government prepare for talks next week in Myitkyina. A series of intense battles raging across Kachin region between Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Burmese Army in areas under KIA's 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Brigades, except in KIA's 5th Brigade area around KIO administrative capital Laiza.

A battle took place between KIA's 12th Battalion troops and Burmese army's 323rd Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) troops at Nam H pang Hka Hku near Kawng Ja village in Mansi Township on 11 September. The two sides encountered again at around 9 am at Lung Bra near Nam H pang Hka Hku.

On the same day, KIA's 12th Battalion troops launched a counter-attack on Burmese army positions at Kawng Ja, Bum Sen and Lung Bra at around 1 pm as Burmese army troops prepared for another offensive operation on KIA's 12th Battalion positions. Another group of KIA troops under 12th Battalion encountered a combined force of Burmese army's 323rd LIB and 522nd LIR under Military Operation Command (MOC) -16 near Mung Ding Pa village in southern Kachin State.

In the same area on 11 September, Kachin people militia's (MHH) 27th Battalion troops fought against Burmese army's 522nd LIB troops at 8:05 am. During the battle, Kai Hteik-based Burmese army's 68th LIR troops assisted 522nd LIB troops by firing 81 mm mortar shells on MHH's 27th Battalion positions for at least three times.

Similar battle took place between Magyeng and Kawng Ja as another government troops from the 507th LIB, approached KIA's 12th Battalion territory from Maji Kung Kaji passing through Je Hka on 10 September.

Local sources say more reinforcements came as government troops continued their offensive operations against KIA's 12th Battalion. On 11 September alone, four military trucks carrying Burmese army soldiers and artillery ammunition headed to Kawng Ja in KIA's 12th Battalion territory from Bhamo.⁹

ANALYSIS

The most recent round of talks between the Working Group for Ethnic Coordination (WGEC) and government formed Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) has seen the acceptance in principle on the nationwide ceasefire accord. While many issues of concerns to both sides remain unclear, the outcome of the talks can be seen as a step in the right direction.

However, beyond this step and despite the government's attempt in declaring peace and reconciliation, the continued bolstering of its military presence and armed clashes in the Shan and Kachin States casts further doubts on the commitment by the government towards national reconciliation. More importantly, it also raises questions on the guarded nature of the military (Tatmadaw) in the peace process and its relationship vis-à-vis to President Thein Sein's government.

⁸ Government and Arakan Liberation Party talks fail to reach agreement – <http://mizzima.com/news-91481/prisoner-watch/10047-government-and-alp-talks-fail-to-reach-agreement> (Mizzima) 11 September 2013

⁹ Burmese army launches major offensives against KIA as government offers a nationwide peace accord – <http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=23672> (KNL) 12 September 2013/
Burma govt and KIO battle in southern Kachin State – <http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2559-burma-govt-and-kio-battle-in-southern-kachin-state.html> (KNG) 11 September 2013 /
Battles spread to KIA's 3rd Brigade area – <http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=23669> (KNL) 11 September 2013

And if the government is committed in resolving the ethnic problems, it will need to review the failures by past governments in fulfilling the political aspirations of the ethnic minorities but also in seeking the endorsement of the Myanmar military, which has remained as an autonomous institution with its own set agenda. The government will thus not only need to expand its political space and but also formulate initiatives that will meet the demands of all stakeholders involved if the peace process is to become a reality.