

POLITICAL MONITOR NO.13

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN RECEIVES UNSG'S SPECIAL ADVISER MR VIJAY NAMBIAR

The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Burma/Myanmar, Mr. Vijay Nambiar, arrived on 21 March to begin a five-day working visit to at the invitation of the Burmese government. Mr. Nambiar met Burmese President Thein Sein and Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin on 25 March in Naypyitaw. The Special Envoy was briefed on the recent outbreak of violence in Meiktila, the on-going reform process in the country and further cooperation between Burma/Myanmar and the United Nations. He also visited the camps in Meiktila for those displaced by the recent communal unrests. On 24 March while in Meiktila, the Special Adviser accompanied by the Chief Minister of Mandalay Region met with leaders of the different communities, religious leaders and representatives of affected families and exchanged views on how to avoid future violent outbreaks from reoccurring and resolve the present crisis in a peaceful manner.¹

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN RECEIVES BELGIAN DELEGATION

A 12-member delegation led by Minister-President Mr. Kris Peeters of the Government of Flanders of Belgium was received by President Thein Sein in Naypyitaw on 25 March. During the official talks, the leaders discussed the role of Belgium companies in river conservation, electricity production and wind energy in Burma/Myanmar, investments in manufacturing foodstuff, livestock, mining, IT services and human resources development in the country. The visiting Belgium delegation also held separate meetings with the Minister for Transport and Livestock and Fisheries and discussed implementation of comprehensive water management project for Ayeyawady River by SBE Company from Belgium and visited the Myaseinyang Milk Processing Plant in Pobbathiri Township.²

VICE-PRESIDENT DR SAI MAUK KHAM RECEIVES FRENCH MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT

French Minister for Development Mr. Pascal Canfin called on Burmese Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham on 22 March in Naypyitaw and discussed bilateral economic cooperation between Burma and France. They exchanged views on exchange of technology to produce natural resources as value-added products as well as conducting sharing knowledge on political, economic, social and other sectors. Mr Canfin and party also held meetings with Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint and Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin. In the meetings discussions were focussed on strengthening of existing relations between the two countries, and assistance in

¹ President U Thein Sein receives UNSG's Special Adviser on Myanmar Mr Vijay Nambiar and party –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/263newsn.pdf> (NLM) 26 March 2013 (p. 16)/

Myanmar, UN focus on further cooperation –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/263newsn.pdf> (NLM) 26 March 2013 (p. 9)/

UNSG's special advisor on Myanmar holds discussion with persons from religious organizations –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/253newsn.pdf> (NLM) 25 March 2013 (p. 8)/

UN secretary-general's special advisor on Myanmar Mr. Vijay Nambiar visits relief camps in Meiktila –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/253newsn.pdf> (NLM) 25 March 2013 (p. 16)/

Press Release at the conclusion of the visit to Myanmar of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Myanmar, Mr. Vijay Nambiar, from 21 to 25 March 2013 –

<http://unic.un.org/imucms/yangon/80/110/home.aspx> (UNIC, Yangon) 25 March 2013

² President U Thein Sein receives Belgian delegation –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/263newsn.pdf> (NLM) 26 March 2013 (p. 1)/

Union Transport Minister holds talks with Minister-President of Government of Flanders of Belgium and party –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/273newsn.pdf> (NLM) 27 March 2013 (p. 10)/

Myanmar, Belgium to cooperate in livestock breeding sector –

<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/273newsn.pdf> (NLM) 27 March 2013 (p. 16)

economic, education and health sectors as well as political reforms and democracy materialization by France to Burma.³

COMMUNAL UNRESTS IN MEIKTILA UPDATE

According to the latest report the official death toll in Meiktila communal violence has reached 11 while 39 other were wounded. The riot also left 152 houses and also lost of property to one government office, 13 religious buildings damaged, it is reported. State of emergency has been imposed in Meiktila, Wundwin, Mahlaing and Thazi townships in Meiktila District. Committees to coordinate relief work and provide assistance have been formed by the Mandalay Regional government. In Meiktila, five makeshift relief camps are being kept open with 9644 victims who are being provided with food and health care. However, the town of Yamethin in witnessed an outbreak of violence on 23 March where religious buildings and 55 houses burnt down but local authorities have managed to restrict the violence from spreading to nearby towns. Police authorities detained 13 suspects on 22 March and 17 more on 24 March in Yamethin township.⁴

UNION LEVEL PEACE-MAKING WORK COMMITTEE, PNLO AGREE TO START POLITICAL DIALOGUES

The Union level Peace-making Work Committee and Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) held peace talks at national level at Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon on 23 March. At the meeting, the two sides reached an agreement in ten major sectors including relief, social affairs, anti-drug, and regional development, most important of all continued ceasefire. The two parties also agreed to continue political dialogues.⁵

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 6th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 30th day meeting on 22nd March. Key issues discussed at the session included the following:

- U Myint Soe of Pyawbwe Constituency (USDP) asked **whether teaching of democratic practices be incorporated into the current education curriculum**. In responding Education Minister Dr Myat Aye, **said that respective teachers are teaching democratic norms and practices that recognize the majority's wishes and provide peace of mind and happiness to students at universities, degree colleges and schools;**

³ Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham receives French, Japanese guests – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/233newsn.pdf> (NLM) 23 March 2013 (p. 1)/
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker receives French Minister of Development and party – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/233newsn.pdf> (NLM) 23 March 2013 (p. 8)/
Union Foreign Affairs Minister receives French Development Minister, guests of United World – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/233newsn.pdf> (NLM) 23 March 2013 (p. 8)

⁴ Public urged to cooperate with authorities to avoid escalation of violence – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/233newsn.pdf> (NLM) 23 March 2013 (p. 16)/
Mandalay Region government forms committees for peace and stability in Meiktila Township – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/243newsn.pdf> (NLM) 24 March 2013 (p. 16)/
Meiktila rehabilitation committees meet – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/253newsn.pdf> (NLM) 25 March 2013 (p. 16)/
Meiktila violence suspects detained – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/253newsn.pdf> (NLM) 25 March 2013 (p. 16)/
Meiktila returns to normalcy, Tatmadawmen clear debris – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/253newsn.pdf> (NLM) 25 March 2013 (p. 8)/
Riot leaves 55 houses in ashes in Ywadan Village, Yamethin – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/253newsn.pdf> (NLM) 25 March 2013 (p. 8)

⁵ Union level Peace-making Work Committee, PNLO agree to start political dialogues – <http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/243newsn.pdf> (NLM) 24 March 2013 (p. 16)

- U Htay Win of Lewe Constituency (USDP) asked the progress of drafting the bill for farmers' and labours' rights. In replying the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw replied that the **legal affairs and special cases assessment commission of Pyithu Hluttaw is working to write the bill** and stressed the need to enact the law for farmers' and workers' rights at the 7th session of the Pyithu Hluttaw.⁶

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 6th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 32nd day meeting on 22nd March. During the session the Speaker of the House made the following points:

- The speaker called on lawmakers to have “self-confidence and courage to speak out what they believe”;
- He demanded **lawmakers to believe in themselves and to meet the must-have qualities;**
- The Speaker also stressed its **obligation to handle the issues of regions and states as priority and expressed sympathy for ethnic representatives, whose proposals on national races affairs were rejected though should be approved. He demanded that a lawmaker needs to act on his own with his thinking power and rationalization, and should not follow the majority in whatever cases. He believes that the interests of the national races people should be placed at the fore.**⁷

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SHAN-KAYAH PEACE CONFERENCE CONCLUDES

The Shan Kayah Trust-building for peace conference held in Lashio, Shan State concluded its session for the inclusion and role of women in the peace process. Nang Hseng NOUNG, representing Shan women emphasized the need of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the peace process. Nang Htwe Mon, a Kayan woman also said that if there is to be genuine peace, it is necessary to amend the legislatures. The current legislative practices are unfair and corrupt and that there was no justice. And if the legislature is implemented in such a way could cause conflicts and disunity among different ethnic groups and communities said Nang Htwe Mon. The conference held in Lashio from 22-24 March was attended 10 political parties, and 11 armed groups while 22 other organizations were invited to attend as observers.⁸

SKIRMISHES CONTINUE BETWEEN KIA AND BURMESE TROOPS

Fighting continued unabated in Kachin and northern Shan State as Burmese army further encroached into territories controlled by KIA and its allies and according to local sources government forces have increased its movements especially in Pangwa areas and northern Shan State since mid February.

⁶ Sixth session of Pyithu Hluttaw ends –
<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/233newsn.pdf> (NLM) 23 March 2013 (p. 16)

⁷ House Speaker: lawmakers should stand out and speak what they believe –
<http://www.mrtv3.net.mm/newpaper/233newsn.pdf> (NLM) 23 March 2013 (p. 16)

⁸ Shan-Kayah peace conference concludes –
http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5323:lashio-conference-concludes-with-women-role&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 25 March 2013/
Lashio Peace conference Press Release –
http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5324:lahio-peace-conference-press-release&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 25 March 2013

A battle took place between KIA's 17th Battalion under 4th Brigade and Burmese army's 323rd Light Infantry unit and Kawng Hka Pyithu Tsit (People Militia backed by Burmese army) near Man Kang Bum on March 25.

Similarly, another battle took place between KIA's 17th Battalion and Burmese army's Tarmonye-based 290th Light Infantry Regiment under North Eastern Command at Manau Bum located between Man Sa and Hu Kan on March 25. On March 24, KIA troops under 4th Brigade deterred government troops under 145th Light Infantry Regiment in Mong Meit township. Reports state that 80 government troops reportedly invaded KIA-controlled areas in Gang Ming, Hkusa, Man Kang and Loi Dau located in Mong Meit and Mantong townships. In Kachin State, KIA's 10th Battalion under 1st Brigade fought against a combined force of Burmese army units and Border Guard Force near border post No. 5 near Pangwa on March 25.⁹

ANALYSIS

The Kachin conflict which has taken back seat to the recent unrests in Meiktila has seen skirmishes reoccurring in Kachin and northern Shan State. While peace talks have been held, it has not been able to prevent outbreaks of fighting between the armed forces of the two sides. Questions will indeed be raised yet again on the commitment of the government and KIA in achieving peace. Both sides should consider options to avoid further clashes and to bring all stakeholders including the Tatmadaw to the negotiating table in striving to attain durable peace. Article 339 of the current Constitution stipulates that "*The Defence Services shall lead in safeguarding the Union against all internal and external dangers*" and therefore the Defence Services should act accordingly and become more involved in the peace process. Any agreements in the absence of the Tatmadaw will not be sustainable.

⁹ Skirmishes continue between KIA and Burmese Troops –
<http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=23192> (Kachinland News) 28 March 2013