

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 34

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT & BURMESE LEADERS RECEIVE CHINESE (CCCPC) DELEGATION

President U Thein Sein received a visiting Chinese delegation led by Mr. Liu Qi, a Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) and Secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee, on 11 November. Those present included the Burmese Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Rail Transportation and Electric Power and Minister for Energy. The two sides held cordial discussions on promoting bilateral relations and cooperation.¹ On the same day, the Chinese delegation also met the Lower House Speaker (Pyithu Hluttaw) Thura U Shwe Mann as well as members of the Hluttaw's relevant committees and discussed the promotion of relations between the two countries.²

During his trip, Mr. Liu also met U Htay Oo, Secretary-General of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in Nay Pyi Taw.³ Burma was the final leg of the CPC delegation's four-country tour, including Laos, Nepal and Bangladesh.⁴

UK SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISITS BURMA

Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo received British Secretary of State for International Development Andrew John Bower Mitchell at the President's Office on 14 November.⁵ Secretary Mitchell also met Lower House Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and discussed Burma's cooperation with the international community. Speaker Shwe Mann also briefed the delegation on the activities of the parliamentary assemblies, the Hluttaw's role in balancing the three pillars— executive, legislature and judiciary and ongoing drafting of bills, as well as political developments taking place within the country.⁶

In addition to his official meetings, Mitchell also met with National League for Democracy (NLD) General-Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 17 November and visited the free elementary school the "Mother's Home" in Hlaingtharyar township on the outskirts of Rangoon. Mitchell commented that "enough had changed to justify a visit and engagement like this" and that he had been given "unfettered access to all levels of government" during the visit, adding: "So in terms of a dialogue there is clearly significant movement, but there are a lot of words still, we need to see actions, and in particular, we need to see these political prisoners released."⁷

¹ President U Thein Sein receives Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Secretary of Beijing Municipal Committee and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-12.pdf> (NLM) 12 November 2011 (p. 1)

² Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives Chinese delegation led by Member of Political Bureau of CCCPC Secretary of Beijing Municipal Committee -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-12.pdf> (NLM) 12 November 2011 (p. 2)

³ Myanmar president and House Chairman meet CPC delegation -

<http://mm.china-embassy.org/eng/sgxw/t877213.htm> (PRC Embassy Yangon) 15 November 2011

⁴ Myanmar president meets CPC delegation -

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-11/12/c_122269108.htm (Xinhua) 12 November 2011

⁵ Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo receives Member of Parliament and Secretary of State for International Development Mr. Andrew John Bower Mitchell of Britain -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 November 2011 (p. 1) /

⁶ Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw receives Member of Parliament and Secretary of State for International Development of Britain - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 November 2011 (p. 16)

⁷ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Met with UK Minister and Visited Mother's Home -

<http://www.nldburma.org/international-affairs/europ/443-daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-met-with-uk-minister-and-visited->

HLUTTAW SESSIONS (47th to 48th day) – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) session:

During the Pyithu Hluttaw session the following key issues were discussed:

- **U Thein Tun Oo of Amarapura Constituency (USDP) discussed amendments by the Amyotha Hluttaw on the Pyithu Hluttaw Bill. In general, the members of the lower house disapproved of the amendments submitted by members of the Amyotha Hluttaw. This subject is likely to come up in discussions in the Amyotha Hluttaw next week (week of 21 Nov).**⁸

The Hluttaw approved the proposal.

- **Member of the Bill Committee U Soe Soe (USDP) submitted the report of the committee and discussed the formation of the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Central Committee.**⁹ (See Appendix A for list of members)

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) Session:

One of the key issues during the session included:

- **U Ohn Tin of Rakhine State Constituency No (10) (RNDP) discussed the Farmland Bill approved and delivered by the Pyithu Hluttaw. U Khin Maung Yi of Ayeyawady Region Constituency No (6) (USDP) proposed amendments to be made to the existing Farmland Law 2011, in order that it would be in accord with the existing Constitution. U Ye Myint of Bago Region Constituency No. 4 (USDP), U Khin Maung Htay of Mandalay Region Constituency No. 10 (USDP) , U Nyi Nyi Tun of Mon State Constituency No. 11 (USDP), U Swe Aung of Yangon Region Constituency No. 12 (USDP), U Thein Hlaing of Sagaing Region Constituency No. 8 (USDP), U Sai Thant Zin of Shan State Constituency No. 4 (SNDP) also participated in the discussions.**¹⁰

The Hluttaw decided that the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee is to re-hear the discussions of the 8 Hluttaw representatives.

SEMINAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE PERSONNEL COMMENCES

A seminar for government officials on human rights was organized by the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and the UN OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia on 14 November. In his speech, Commission Chairman U Win Mra said that the formation of a national level human rights commission playing a key role in combating the violence against human rights is a correct step for Burma, adding that the commission scrutinizes complaints as quickly as possible to solve the problems, and that government service personnel at the seminar should apply what they have learned in order to enthusiastically participate in raising human rights in the nation. The opening ceremony was attended by members of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission,

[mothers-home.html](#) (NLD) 17 November 2011 &

UK minister Andrew Mitchell begins visit to Burma -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-15733360> (BBC) 15 November 2011

⁸ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 47th day/As there was no disagreement on the report, the Hluttaw decided to send back the Hluttaw Office Bill -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2011 (p. 1, 7, 8 & 9)

⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 48th day/ One proposal discussed, information to enlist given, formation of commission submitted, approval for one bill sought -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-17.pdf> (NLM) 17 November 2011 (p. 16, 8, & 9).

¹⁰ Second regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 46th day/One bill discussed, one proposal submitted -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2011 (p. 1, 9 & 10)

representatives of UN OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, scholar instructors, representatives of UNICEF and OCHA and departmental representatives.¹¹

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

NLD WILL CONTEST IN BURMESE BY-ELECTION

Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), voted on 18 November to rejoin the political fray and field candidates for seats in parliament. Observers say the move almost guarantees that democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi will occupy a Parliament seat, or perhaps even a higher position in the government, which has orchestrated a number of steps to bring the Nobel Peace laureate into the political process. Central executive committee members from 13 states and regions supported the influential party's re-emergence into Burma's rapidly changing political scene, which has seen a series of calculated steps designed to move the military-dominated leadership toward a more democratic system. In an oral vote, all of the 106 central committee members who attended the meeting voted unanimously to support reactivating the NLD as a legal political party. Top NLD officials say the country is moving incrementally to a more democratic system. In the upcoming by-election, 48 constituencies at the Union and regional levels will be contested. Observers say the election will probably be held in December 2011.¹²

SNLD PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS MAY AFFECT ETHNIC TRUST IN SUU KYI

Sai Leik, the spokesperson for the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) which won the most seats in Shan State in the 1990 elections, has said that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi may likely lose the trust, support and hopes of the ethnic nationalities if her party decides to take part in the upcoming elections. He added that, "We understand that Daw Aung San Su Kyi is trying hard to gain the release of political prisoners and to achieve a genuine democracy, but I'm afraid participating in the elections without first achieving at least the release of political prisoners is not a good idea. We are worried ethnic nationalities will never dare to trust her again." The comments come amidst news that Aung San Suu Kyi is considering running in by-elections in the coming months after her party, the NLD, re-registers under a recently amended electoral law.¹³

KNU 'PEACE COMMITTEE' READY TO TALK PEACE

After four days of an emergency meeting of their senior leaders the Karen National Union (KNU) has formed a seven member 'Peace Committee' to enter into peace talks with the Burmese government. The meeting, held from 8 to 11 November, was attended by members of the KNU central executive committees, central standing committees, and representatives from seven KNLA Brigades and seven Districts of Karen State. KNU sources say the objective of forming a 'Peace Committee' is to have a mechanism in position to be able to effectively engage and deal with issues in regard to any future peace talks. The committee is composed of senior KNU officials, including KNU vice-chairman Padoh Saw David Thakabaw as Chairperson, KNLA's G.O.C General Mu Tu Sae Poe as Vice Chairperson, Padoh Saw David Taw as Secretary, KNU General-Secretary Naw Zipporah Sein, Head of KNU Health and Welfare Major Roger Khin, KNU Forestry Minister Padoh Saw Ah Toe, and KNU Chairman of Pa-an District Padoh Saw Aung Maw Aye. Before the formation of the 'Peace Committee', the KNU had

¹¹ Seminar on human rights for government service personnel commences – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 November 2011 (p. 2)

¹² NLD will contest in Burmese by-election - <http://mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6201-nld-will-contest-in-burmese-by-election-.html> (Mizzima) 18 November 2011

¹³ SNLD participation in elections may affect ethnic trust in Ms Suu Kyi - http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4204:snld-participation-in-elections-may-affect-ethnic-trust-in-ms-suu-kyi&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 15 November 2011

held three preliminary discussions with government officials. On 10 October, KNU general secretary Naw Zipporah Sein led a KNU delegation and met with central parliamentary representatives from Nay Pyi Taw in the border town of Mae Sot. Similarly two unofficial meetings were also held between State level representatives and the KNU prior the 10 October meeting, but failed to gain legitimacy since the KNU Executive Committee had not endorsed these meetings. According to sources on the border, the government delegation was led by Karen State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Aung Lwin and included local community and religious leaders and elders.¹⁴

ANALYSIS

The decision taken by the National League for Democracy (NLD) to re-register has been the talk of the town and will have given the country's new government encouragement and momentum as it strives to promote change to the country. At the same time, the path to democracy in Burma has not been easy to say the least. While the new government appears to be taking steps to promote reform, it continues to pursue conflict with ethnic groups along its borders.

That being said, the recent decision taken by the Karen National Union (KNU) to enter peace negotiations with the central government can be regarded as a positive step. While it would be premature to predict the outcome of the talks with the KNU, the fact remains that the KNU conflict together with other ethnic issues will pose major challenges for President U Thein Sein during his tenure and beyond. Previous governments have failed to understand the desires of the ethnic nationalities and have never been willing to enter into political dialogue in order to find just and equitable solutions to end decades of fighting which has plagued the country ever since its independence.

Under these circumstances, the announcement to re-register itself as a political party by the NLD and the decision by the KNU to enter negotiations with the government will certainly prove to be instrumental in shaping the country's political landscape. The government, the NLD and the KNU may be on the verge of initiating the process leading to "tripartite-dialogue" as called for by the UN. It remains to be seen if this process will gain its desired goal in ushering political stability and peace.

¹⁴ KNU 'Peace Committee' ready to talk peace - <http://karennews.org/2011/11/knu-%E2%80%98peace-committee%E2%80%99-ready-to-talk-peace.html/> (Karen News)
12 November 2011

APPENDICES***Other important announcements and news***

Appendix A:

Formation of the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Central Committee¹⁵

Sr.	Current Portfolio	Ministry	Appointed Designation
1.	Minister	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation	Chairman
2.	Minister	Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry	Vice-Chairman
3.	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation	Member
4.	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation	Member
5.	Deputy Minister	Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development	Member
6.	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries	Member
7.	Director-General	General Administration Department, Ministry of Home Affairs	Member
8.	Managing Director	Myanma Agriculture Service, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation	Member
9.	Managing Director	Myanma Industrial Crops Development Enterprise, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation	Member
10.	Director-General	Planning and Statistics Department, Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry	Member
11.	Director-General	Mining Department , Ministry of Mines	Member
12.	Director-General	Cooperative Department, Ministry of Cooperatives	Member
13.	Director-General	Planning Department, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development	Member
14.	Director-General	Settlement and Land Records Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation	Secretary
15.	Director-General	Forest Department, Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry	Joint-Secretary

¹⁵ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 48th day/ One proposal discussed, information to enlist given, formation of commission submitted, approval for one bill sought - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-17.pdf> (NLM) 17 November 2011 (p. 16, 8 & 9).