

POLITICAL MONITOR NO.35

OFFICIAL MEDIA

BOMB BLASTS ROCK REGIONS IN BURMA

Burma has been struck by a series of bomb attacks in several major cities and small townships throughout the country. In the capital Yangon, three explosions have left two citizens and one foreigner, a woman, injured in Yangon Region — one at a bus-stop near Sawbwagyigon highway bus terminal in Insein Township and another at a tax-free market in Thakayta Township on 13 October and at the Traders Hotel in Kyauktada Township on 14 October. A bomb also exploded at the Chanmyae Lodging in Toungoo, Bago Region on 11 October leaving two dead and one wounded. Two further explosions were reported in Namkham, Shan State on 17 October. The first bomb blast occurred on Union Road in Momkham Ward, left one dead and three injured. In a similar attack, 3 civilians were injured when a hand-made bomb exploded at the traffic island about 50 yards east of the first incident. The authorities are carrying out an extensive manhunt for those bombing suspects. People are asked to come forward with information about the suspects to police stations and officials concerned. Undetonated explosive devices and bombs were found at restaurants in Rangoon and Mandalay and police have detained two suspects in connections with the-bomb attacks.¹

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MIN AUNG HLAING VISITS BEIJING

The Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar Armed Forces Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and a high-level delegation arrived in China of 13 October to begin an official visit. Min Aung Hlaing met Chinese President Xi Jinping on 17 October in Beijing. Xi, who is also the Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the People's Liberation Army, expressed his delight for the comprehensive strategic partnership which was upgraded from the Pauk-phaw relations between the two countries and good relations between the two governments, armed forces and the peoples. He also lauded the military-to-military ties between the two sides, proposing increased exchanges and promoting cooperation to contribute to the bilateral relationship. Min Aung Hlaing said that his visit to China would help to further strengthen ties between the two armed forces, and pledged that Burma would make efforts to strengthening the future bilateral relations between the two countries. The Burmese leader also called on Chief the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army General Fang Fenghui and Vice-Chairman of Central Military Commission of the People's Liberation Army General Fan Changlong and held talks matters of mutual interest between the two countries and armies including exchange of high-level visits, equipment cooperation, personnel training, frontier defense between the two armed forces. He also visited the Academy of Armoured Forces Engineering and the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation- CASIC and NORINCO Company in Beijing.²

¹ Bomb blast at bus stop, no injury Reported –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-14-red.pdf> (NLM) 14 October 2013 (p. 9) /
Suspicious package discovered in Ahlon –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 October 2013 (p. 8) /
Bomb destroyed under control conditions in Mandalay –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 October 2013 (p. 8) /
Suspects detained, named in connection with recent bombings in some regions –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 October 2013 (p. 8) /
People requested to inform MPF of information about suspects –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-10-17.pdf> (NLM) 17 October 2013 (p. 8) /
Blast at Lodging leaves two dead, one injured –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 October 2013 (p. 7) /
Two bomb blasts in Namkham of Shan State kill one, injury six –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-10-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 October 2013 (p. 8)

² Myanma Tatmadaw delegation on goodwill visit to China –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-13-red.pdf> (NLM) 13 October 2013 (p. 16) /
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife and party arrive in China –

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 9th day meeting on 14 October. During the session the following issues were raised and answered:

- U Kyi Tha of Gwa Constituency raised a question on the **progress in reaching an agreement on norms and standards for electrical and electronic products**. Deputy Minister for Science and Technology Dr Ba Shwe, said that **Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) is only a process, not an agreement; that the present situation is taking place in accord with Myanmar Electricity Law 1984 which is being rewritten to be in conformity with the present time, that formulation of rules and regulations which correspond to international standards being applied in ASEAN countries will follow after the enactment of a new law, and that plans are underway to accept ASEAN standards directly.**
- U Aye Mauk of Mahlaing Constituency raised a question regarding **the provision of loans to SMEs**. Deputy Minister for Industry U Thein Aung answered that **no separate recommendation is needed to receive the loans from the banks because SMEs have been registered and approved as private industries. Moreover, it is not required to release a notice as lists of private industries are distributed in respective townships.**³

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 10th day meeting on 15 October. During the session:

- **The Bill's Committee Report on the Media Bill** was submitted by MP U Soe Yei.⁴

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 9th day meeting on 14 October. The following key proposal was submitted and discussed at the session:

- U Myo Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency No 6 submitted a **proposal urging the Union government to implement Burmese forest policy to ensure permanent forest estate-PFE. The proposal called for the need to stop the annual loss of forest area as 19 per cent of forest coverage area during 85 years period from 1925 to 2010. An announcement has been issued that timber log extraction will be stopped in the first week of April 2014 after exportation of logs due to agreements for fetching foreign exchange.**⁵

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-14-red.pdf> (NLM) 14 October 2013 (p. 16 & 9) /

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife visit mountain resort in Jiuzhaigou –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 October 2013 (p. 1 & 8) /

Myanmar commits to make full cooperation with China: C-in-C –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 October 2013 (p. 9) /

Myanmar military delegation visits Armoured Forces Engineering Academy in Beijing –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 October 2013 (p. 16) /

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits industrial companies in Beijing –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-10-17.pdf> (NLM) 17 October 2013 (p. 8) /

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends dinner hosted by CMC Vice-Chairman of the PLA –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-10-17.pdf> (NLM) 17 October 2013 (p. 16) /

C-in-C meets Chairman of Central Military Commission of PLA –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docsMA2013/NLM2013-10-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 October 2013 (p. 16)

³ Pyithu Hluttaw's eighth regular session goes on –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 October 2013 (p. 16)

⁴ Bill Committee submits report on Media Bill –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 October 2013 (p. 16 & 9)

⁵ Schools need to submit complete documents for upgrading –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 October 2013 (p. 16)

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 10th day meeting on 15 October. The following key proposal was submitted and discussed at the session:

- Dr Myint Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No 8 submitted a **proposal urging the Union Government to draw necessary laws on oil and natural gas exploration.** MP Myint Kyi stated that, **artesian oil wells are being sunk on a manageable scale in various areas throughout the country and, outbreaks of fire have been caused due to these actions. The existing law in Burma was enacted 50 years ago and has become outdated and thus the need to review and enact a new law was timely.**⁶

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 4th day meeting on 15 October. During the session:

- The session recorded the Bill Amending the Myanmar Aircraft Act, the Bill Amending the Myanmar Maritime University Act, and the Bill Amending the Trade Mark Act.
- Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann also clarified the reports of the representatives of Rakhine State during the meeting on development of Rakhine State on 29 September in Yangon and the sending of a message to the President to review the reports;
- Discussions on the Additional Budget Allocation Bill for 2013-2014 FY were forwarded by the Minister for Finance U Win Shein;
 - In his report, the Minister said **the 2013- 2014 revised budget estimate shows an increase of 722.515 billion kyats over the budget estimate and the 2013-2014 revised budget estimate for expenditure shows an increase of 683.249 billion kyats over the budget estimate for expenditure;**
 - **The fiscal deficit of the budget estimate is 2,926.745 billion kyat and the fiscal deficit of the revised budget estimate is 2,887.479 billion kyats and the ratio of fiscal deficit GDP has decreased from 4.94 % in the budget estimate to 4.87 % in the revised budget estimate.**
 - **The budget estimate includes foreign loans and cash assistance of 1,157.714 billion kyats and the budget estimate expenditure includes 1,134.951 billion kyats of foreign loans and cash assistance.**
 - **The ratio of tax revenue to GDP in the budget estimate is 4.40 % and 6.06 % in the revised budget estimate due to increases in tax and revenues collected by Ministries of Commerce, Finance, Rail Transportation, Energy, Electric Power, Mines as well as Communications and Information Technology and the tax collected contributed to the revenue of the country.**
 - **There is an increase of 80.307 billion kyats in the normal expenditure, 506.05 billion kyats in the loans expenditure and 96.892 billion kyats in the debt expenditure, and there is an decrease of 86.826 billion kyats in the capital expenditure of the state-owned enterprises.**
 - **Additional budget sought by the Union-level bodies is 1,932.997 billion kyats and the Union government has allowed 1,394.116 billion kyats.**
 - **Regarding the additional budget of the regions and states, the budget estimate shows that the Union Government has allowed to provide 548.959 billion kyats and to grant loans of 31.875 million kyats to them. The revised budget estimate shows that more 77.374 billion kyats would be added to them. Minister U Win Shein asked Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to approve the Revised Budget Estimate for the 2013-2014 FY and the Additional Budget Allocation Bill for the 2013-2014 FY.**⁷

⁶ Amyotha Hluttaw to constitute parliamentary associations for uplift of qualification of Hluttaw and MPs – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 October 2013 (p. 16)

⁷ Additional Budget Allocation Bill for 2013-2014 FY put forward to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 October 2013 (p. 16 & 9)

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

KOKANG GROUP JOINS UNFC ALLIANCE

The United National Federal Council (UNFC) has accepted the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) – also known as the Kokang Democracy Party – as its newest member. The decision was finalized on 10 October at the closing of the meeting with ethnic armed groups that are not part of the UNFC. Nai Hong Sar, who serves as general secretary for both the UNFC and the New Mon State Party (NMSP), said the MNDAA requested to join. “We have accepted their request to become a new member, but as a temporary member for now,” said the general secretary adding that the necessary paperwork still needs to be completed. U Phone Win Naing, an official for the MNDAA, said like all the ethnic groups their party wants peace. By joining the UNFC they can “work together, hand in hand”, he said. The other non-UNFC ethnic armed groups who also attended the meeting included: Arakan Liberation Party (ALB), Arakan Army (AA), Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), MNDAA and All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF).⁸

KNPP HAS NO DECISION TO JOIN NATIONWIDE CEASEFIRE YET

The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) is absenting for nationwide ceasefire signing, which will be held in Naypyidaw within this month according to spokesperson. “We, the KNPP haven’t made any decisions to attend coming nationwide ceasefire meeting.” said U Aung San Myint, KNPP Secretary-1. This comes after the Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC) led by Vice-chairman U Aung Min held a pre-meeting with United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) in Chiang Mai on 8 September to make a framework for coming nationwide ceasefire agreement.

“Even if we have to attend this signing as a member of UNFC, we have to make sure to be guaranteed our future political dialogue.” said U Aung San Myint. However, some of the other members are interested in signing the nationwide ceasefire agreement. “If this signing succeeds without some ethnic armed groups, it is not Nationwide Ceasefire after all,” said U Saw Lwin spokesperson of Kayan New Land Party (KNLP).

Although KNPP has signed ceasefire agreement with government in 2012 and also held 2 union level meetings in 2013, both sides haven’t reached any agreements on military movement such as building of military training school, the withdrawal of government outpost troops, dam issues, military movement boundaries issue and to eliminate KNPP from illegal organizations list. After signing ceasefire agreement with the government on 7 May 2012, the KNPP opened three liaison offices inside to monitor both military movements. Today, the KNPP also runs two business companies (Ta Maw Htyar and Kayah Htarni) for organization’s income.⁹

CNF TO HOLD PUBLIC CONSULTATION IN RANGOON

The Chin National Front (CNF) is to conduct a consultation with the Chin public in Rangoon on 19 October. The event, arranged in collaboration with the organizing committee comprising representatives from political parties, communities and religious groups, is aimed at seeking and discussing issues affecting the people. The intention is also to make the public aware of the ongoing peace talks between CNF and Burma’s government, and to allow them to participate in the process.

Leaders and representatives of Chin political parties, communities and churches, activists, scholars and individuals based in the former capital and nearby are expected to attend the Saturday

⁸ Kokang group joins UNFC –
<http://monnews.org/2013/10/14/kokang-group-joins-unfc/> (IMNA) 14 October 2013

⁹ KNPP has no decision to join nationwide ceasefire yet –
<http://www.ktimes.org/en/news/regional/item/235-knpp-has-no-decision-to-join-nationwide-ceasefire-yet>
(Kantawaddy Times) 14 October 2013

consultation. As agreed in the ceasefire deal package, the CNF has organized a series of public consultations across Chin State and in other countries including USA.

It also plans to hold meetings with the Chin public in Mandalay, Kalay and Tamu Districts of Sagaing Region and Magwe Region ahead of the Chin National Conference scheduled in November this year.¹⁰

ANALYSIS

The recent spate of bombings in Burma has once again, shown that the country's reforms and national reconciliation processes remain fragile and unclear. While no one has claimed responsibility for the attacks, Burma has in the past witnessed similar bomb attacks during the times of the military regime after 1988. However, the recent bombings come at a time when Burma is preparing to host the South-East Asian Games in December and to chair ASEAN in 2014. Though the extent of damage and death toll has been minimal, it is clear that the aim of these attacks was designed to alarm and destabilize the country and people. Similarly, Burma has witnessed outbreaks of communal violence in the past year and that the recent bomb attacks could trigger more unrest. Blaming and finger-pointing will not be the answer in resolving these attacks. The authorities will need to implement initiatives and measure to regain public trust and more importantly prevent prevent such attacks from re-occurring in the future. Despite the achievements and progresses made since taking office, President Thein Sein is still confronted with resolving fundamental questions regarding the peace process as well as the calls for constitutional amendments. And if not handled correctly, could derail not only the national reconciliation process but also jeopardize the country's democratic transition.

¹⁰ CNF to hold public consultation in Rangoon –

<http://chinlandguardian.com/index.php/chin-news/item/1964-cnf-to-hold-public-consultation-in-rangoon> (Chinland Guardian) 15 October 2013