

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 13

OFFICIAL MEDIA

EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF VISITS BURMA, OPENS NEW EU OFFICE

The European Union's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton became the highest EU official to visit Burma when she arrived in Yangon on 28 April, when she inaugurated the first Office of the European Union to Myanmar in the presence of National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Chief Minister for Rangoon Region U Myint Swe, as well as the new Head of the EU Office Andreas List.¹

Ashton also met with Suu Kyi at the NLD headquarters in Yangon on 28 April before travelling to Nay Pyi Taw. She welcomed the role being played by Aung San Suu Kyi in the on-going political process while, but also urged all stakeholders to work for the interest of the country. She also emphasized that the EU was ready support the different initiatives in helping the country and those in the rural communities (with 150 million euro available for 2012-2013) and that the new EU office would play a key role in implementing these objectives.²

In Nay Pyi Taw, Ashton called on President Thein and senior government ministers. They cordially discussed raising the EU's recognition of the reform process in Burma as well as encouraging the EU as a partner organization, the realization of the internal peace making process in order to achieve long-lasting peace, economic and human resource development in Burma. She also met Speaker of the Lower House Thura Shwe Mann and the Secretary-General of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) U Htay Oo.³

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT, ADDRESSES PARLIAMENT

At the invitation of the President, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon arrived in Nay Pyi Taw on 29 April, where he met President Thein Sein, Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin, the Speakers of the two houses of Parliament, government ministers and became the first foreigner to address the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. *For more information on the UNSG's speech, please see below.*

In his meeting with the President, UNSG Ban said to that his visit was to encourage the progress of transition to democracy in Burma and to that end the UN would take the necessary steps to normalize its operations in the country. Furthermore, the UN would assist in technology, managing and financial sectors for taking the census in Burma in 2014 as well as in promoting relations between the international community and Burma. He also welcomed the efforts being made by the government for national reconciliation and urged the President to continue such efforts. President Thein Sein expressed his thanks saying that democratic transition in Burma would improve due to the assistance and encouragement from the UN and pledged that Burma continue its in aspiring to

¹ EU Office in Myanmar opened –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 April 2012 (p. 8) /

Catherine Ashton opens the EU office in Burma/Myanmar -

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/129918.pdf (EEAS website) 28 April 2012

² Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Yangon, Burma/ Myanmar, 28 April 2012 -

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/129917.pdf (EEAS website) 30 April 2012

³ President U Thein Sein receives High Representative of European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 16) /

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives High Representative of EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 8) /

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy calls on USDP Secretary-General -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/Mirror2012-04-30.pdf> (The Mirror) 30 April 2012 (p. 10)

be a democratic nation. He urged the UN to participate in aiding rural development and poverty alleviation tasks and requested the UN Secretary-General to urge the EU to fully lift its economic sanction on the country in view of the changes taking place.⁴

On the sidelines of his official visit, Ban also met with the government's peace negotiating team and visited poppy substitute crop cultivation project being undertaken by the government and the United Nations Office for Drug (UNODC) in Kyaukkachar Village, Hopon Township in Shan State.⁵

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER WESTERWELLE MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT

During a recent official visit to Burma, German Foreign Minister Dr Guido Westerwelle met President Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw on 30 April, as well as his counterpart U Wunna Maung Lwin. The discussions included the current political developments, as well as matters relating to bilateral cooperation, further cementing relationships between the two countries.⁶

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After talks with National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi on 30 April in Yangon, Westerwelle said that Germany would support the Burmese people and that it would promote "sustainable reforms for democracy, freedom and the rule of law."⁷

KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER KIM MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT

During his visit to Burma from 1-2 May, South Korean Minister Foreign Affairs and Trade Kim Sung-hwan met President Thein Sein and his counterpart Wunna Maung Lwin in Nay Pyi Taw on 2 May 2012. Minister Kim discussed further strengthening bilateral relations and promoting economic cooperation through investment in energy, mineral trade between the two countries. The President expressed his gratitude to Korea for its development cooperation efforts and also for continued support and growth in bilateral exchanges in various fields, including politics, economy, culture and sports. Minister Kim is the first ROK Foreign Minister to visit Burma since 1985.⁸

⁴ Union FM and wife welcome UNSG and wife at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-30.pdf> (NLM) 30 April 2012 (p. 16) /

EU should fully lift its economic sanction on Myanmar as it suspended sanction while most countries had already lifted economic sanction on Myanmar. (President U Thein Sein) / UN will normalize its operations in Myanmar at full capacity as quickly as possible. (UNSG Mr Ban Ki-moon) -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 1 & 8) /

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker, UN delegation led by UNSG hold talks -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 9) /

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives UN Secretary-General and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 8) /

Exchange of letters signed between United Nations and Immigration&Population Ministry for 2014 Population and Housing Census in Myanmar -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 7)

⁵ Union-Level peace-making group hosts working lunch to UN SG and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 11) /

UNSG and wife visit poppy-substitute crop cultivation project in Hopon Tsp, Shan State -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 2) /

UN chief visits Myanmar in light of significant changes -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-30.pdf> (NLM) 30 April 2012 (p. 3)

⁶ President U Thein Sein holds discussion with Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs and party of Germany -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 16) /

Union FM holds talks with German counterpart -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 11) /

German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs arrives in Yangon -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-30.pdf> (NLM) 30 April 2012 (p. 2)

⁷ All eyes on Myanmar reforms - <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,15917381,00.html> (Deutsche Welle) 29 April 2012

⁸ President U Thein Sein receives Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of ROK and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 May 2012 (p. 1) /

PARLIAMENT DELEGATIONS VISIT EUROPE: LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER SHWE MANN LEADS DELEGATION TO GERMANY & BELGIUM, GROUP of 9 MPs IN BERLIN

A Burmese parliamentary delegation led by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann left for Germany and Belgium at the invitation of Brussels-based European Parliament Speaker Martin Shultz under the Hanns Siedel Stiftung programme to observe and pay goodwill visits to assemblies in Germany and Belgium. The members of the delegation include Pyithu Hluttaw Projects and Financial Development Committee Chairman U Soe Tha (USDP), International Relations Committee Chairman U Hla Myint Oo (USDP), Economic and Trade Development Committee Chairman U Maung Maung Thein (USDP), Investment and Industrial Development Committee Chairman U Htay Myint (USDP), National Races Affairs and Internal Peace-making Committee Secretary Daw Dwe Bu (UDPKS), Bill Committee Member Daw Nan Wah Nu (SNDP) and other officials.⁹

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Similarly, a 9-member parliamentary delegation toured Germany at the invitation of the Liberal Party from the German Bundestag. The group included SNDP Chairman Sai Ai Pao, Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) MP Dr Aye Maung, National League for Democracy (NLD) MPs U Min Oo and Dr Hla Myat Thwe, as well as Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) MPs U Win Oo and U Win Than.¹⁰

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 3rd regular session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw continued for the 22nd day session and was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann (USDP) and 371 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives. One bill was submitted and approved and 2 reports read out. The key issues were:

- **The Foreign Expenditure Bill was submitted.** MPs wishing to participate in the discussions on the bill were urged to register.
- **Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Myo Myint submitted a bill on Revocation of Foreign Relations Act** and Bill Committee member U Khin Maung Shwe read out the report of the committee regarding the bill.
- Bill Committee member Dr Soe Moe Aung read out the report of the committee regarding **the 2012 Basic Education Bill.**¹¹

On the 23rd day session the Speaker and 343 representatives attended, 1 bill was ratified, parliamentary matters were explained and an affirmation of oath by MPs was conducted. The key issues included:

- **The list of names of the 37 elected as Pyithu Hluttaw representatives in the 1st April by-elections was announced** with Notification No. 17/2012 and No. 20/2012 of the Union

Myanmar, ROK Foreign Affairs Minister meet -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 May 2012 (p. 2) /

Outcome of Foreign Minister Kim Sung-Hwan's visit to Myanmar -

http://www.mofat.go.kr/ENG/press/ministrynews/20120502/137458.jsp?menu=m_10_10 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ROK) 2 May 2012

⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann leaves for Germany, Belgium -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 May 2012 (p. 1)

¹⁰ Shwe Mann's Westbound delegation includes ethnic women MPs -

http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4641:shwe-manns-westbound-delegation-includes-ethnic-women-mps&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 4 May 2012

¹¹ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for 22nd day / One bill submitted and approved, reports read out -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 April 2012 (p. 1)

Election Commission and 34 of those 37 attended the session. Under the Section 8 (b) of the Pyithu Hluttaw Law, **34 Hluttaw representatives (including Aung San Suu Kyi) took the oath** in the presence of the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker.

- **The Foreign Currency Expenditure Bill was approved.**
- The Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker gave clarifications on activities taken by the Pyithu Hluttaw during its 3rd regular session from 26 January to 2 May 2012.¹²

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Daw Aung San Suu Kyi together with 33 other members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) were sworn in as a Hluttaw representative on the 23rd day also the final day of the third regular session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw, thereby opening a new chapter in the Nobel Laureate's near quarter-century struggle for democracy. Aung San Suu Kyi and the elected NLD members initially balked at taking the oath contesting that the wording 'safeguard' be changed to 'respect' as stipulated in the 2008 constitution. Speaking to reporters after taking oath in the Hluttaw, Suu Kyi said that she believed she could "serve the interests of the people more than before". The NLD is the main opposition force in parliament after securing 43 of the 44 seats it contested in the by-elections. 38 of its 41 representatives in the parliamentary assemblies were present to take the oath at the Hluttaw sessions. Three NLD members elected as Pyithu Hluttaw representatives U Phyo Min Thein, U Phyo Zayar Thaw and Daw Sandar Minn were absent from taking the oath as they were participating in a workshop in Australia.¹³

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 3rd regular session of the first Amyotha Hluttaw continued for the 21st day. Speaker U Khin Aung Myint (USDP) and 161 Amyotha Hluttaw representatives attended.

- **4 elected Hluttaw representatives were sworn in as new MPs** in accordance with Amyotha Hluttaw Law section (8), subsection (b) in the presence of the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker.
- The Speaker announced that **the next session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw would be held in July** later this year.¹⁴

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw) Sessions

Discussions on the Legislative Process in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

On 28 April 2012, the combined session of the two houses debated the legislative process of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw - discussions were focused on recent letters sent by the President and Lower House Speaker to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann sent a letter on 28 March to the President regarding three issues, questioning the legislative process and conformity to the law regarding the President's 'executive' decisions:

- a) The decision to reduce the monthly salaries of Union level officials.
- b) The decision to increase the pensions of retired service personnel.
- c) The decision to form the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission.

¹² Third regular session of First Pyithu Hluttaw concludes - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 May 2012 (p. 7)

¹³ A new era for NLD after reps take oath - <http://www.mmTimes.com/2012/news/625/news62501.html> (Myanmar Times) May 7-13, 2012

¹⁴ Third regular session of First Amyotha Hluttaw concludes - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 May 2012 (p. 10)

The Bills Committee's findings that these three decisions do not conform to the law were attached to the Speaker's letter.

On 9 April 2012, the President responded to the letter from the Speaker with the following points for consideration:

- a) The matter concerning the reduction of the salaries of the Union level personnel according to the pledge of the President may be carried out under Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's approval.
- b) Regarding the increased-rate pension scheme, measures were taken in accord with the law. However, it is mentioned here that Pyidaungsu Hluttaw may, if it wishes, increase the pension rate with its own decision.
- c) Regarding the formation of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission as central level institution and budget allotment proposal for its expenses, it is explained as follows:
 - Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was formed with the aim of reducing alien pressure and in the interest of the state, while also seeking to protect and promote fundamental rights of citizens.
 - Its formation is neither in conformity with the constitution nor in line with existing laws.
 - The designation of the Commission, its budget and those serving within the Commission had been cancelled, however the commission would remain to exist since it was formed under executive power.
 - A bill is being drafted to transform the commission into legally organized one. Under the approval of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the law would be enacted and measures would be taken for further development of the commission.¹⁵

The 29th day session was attended by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and 600 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Representatives. UNSG Ban Ki-Moon addressed the assembly, 1 bill was put on record, clarifications on Hluttaw's undertakings were given, and a report of Joint Hluttaw Rights Committee was submitted. The key issues included:

- The session put on record **the Important Commodity and Service Bill**.
- Clarification on parliamentary matters was made by the Speaker.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon addressed the assembly – the first foreigner to do so. In his speech he:

- called on foreign governments to “go further” in removing all trade restrictions and sanctions against Burma,
- praised the President for his vision, leadership and courage to put Burma on the path to change,
- welcomed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and others in joining the political process by participating in the recent by-elections,
- stated that the path of change is still fragile and uncertain and that there is no single formula for success and that understanding and cooperation by all stakeholders was crucial in shaping the country's future,

¹⁵ President sends message to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker stating issues related to low salaries of union level personnel, increased pensions of retired service personnel and establishing Myanmar National Human Rights Commission - http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM_2012-04-29.pdf (NLM) 29 April 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

- urged the need to develop natural resources while supporting emerging manufacturing and services industries, enhancing governance in both the public and private sectors, and preserving the precious landscape and ecology of the country and to that end adopting policies which would provide balance, equitable development, to all communities and regions of Burma,
- on the national reconciliation process, he stated that
 - o issues on displaced communities, securities for various ethnic and political groups and release of all political prisoners remain key priorities
 - o it is important for the government to build trust and restore confidence among the country's diverse ethnic, political and religious groups
 - o success in national reconciliation will hinge on how these issues are discussed in the various parliamentary institutions both at the national and regional levels.
- emphasised the need in having safeguards for civil society and the rule of law, and respect for human rights, especially for free association and free speech
- reminded the elected MPs that Burma was a founding member of the U.N., and that he followed in the footsteps of U Thant, the former U.N. secretary-general who called on the world to overcome violence and stressed the need "to understand each other and to develop a spirit of One World."¹⁶

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BURMA ARMY ESCALATES CONFLICT, FLIES IN REINFORCEMENTS IN BID TO RETAKE KACHIN TERRITORY

In an escalation of its offensive, the Burma army used helicopters during the last week of April to airlift an estimated 200 troops to reinforce government positions near the Kachin town of Pangwa located on the Kachin-China border in order to retake the town. Pangwa, which is an important trading area due to its proximity to the Kachin state capital Myitkyina, came under the control of the Kachin Independence Organization in late April after troops from the government controlled Border Guard Force who were previously in an KIO breakaway faction joined the resistance. The fall of Pangwa has been a major embarrassment to the army. The army's Myitkyina-based Northern Regional Command also sent ground troops to Pangwa through the Myitkyina-Waingmaw-Chipwi road, however, the troops were unable to reach Pangwa due to strong resistance from Kachin forces along the route according local villagers. The locals in Chipwi reported that KIO forces had destroyed five army trucks nearby on 1 May in a bid to block the army from sending troop reinforcements to army positions at Pangwa.¹⁷

CNF DELEGATION ARRIVES IN CHIN STATE FOR 2nd ROUND OF PEACE TALKS

A 17-member delegation of the armed group the Chin National Front arrived in the Chin State capital Hahke to begin a second round of talks with the Burmese government from 7-8 May as part of the ongoing peace process. The two sides are to discuss further plans towards the peace process and to

¹⁶ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw third regular session concludes successfully / Address delivered, bill put on record, clarifications on Hluttaw's undertakings made, Joint Committee's report submitted -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-05-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 May 2012 (p. 10 & 11) /

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Address to Union Assembly of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar -

http://www.un.org/apps/news/in_focus/speeches/statements_full.asp?statID=1526 (UN News Centre) 30 April 2012

¹⁷ Burma army flies in reinforcements in bid to retake Pangwa -

<http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2289-burma-army-flies-in-reinforcements-in-bid-to-retake-pangwa.html> (KNG) 5

May 2012 /

Govt Helicopter Reportedly Shells KIO Bases -

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/3513> (Irrawaddy) 3 May 2012

define the “Terms of Reference” (TOR) regarding the original 9-point agreement reached between the two parties in January 2012. Developing the TOR in the cease-fire process has been seen as crucial to maintaining an effective mechanism towards halting armed hostilities as both parties try to observe the agreement. The TOR is to be the operational basis for determining the specific role of each group in meeting the points of the agreement. Some of the points of the original agreement, among others, include provisions that would allow the CNF and its unarmed members to travel across Burma freely and for the two sides to work together on ‘development projects’ in Chin State as a preliminary confidence-building measure before substantive political settlement takes place.

The CNF, which took up arms following the 1988 uprising in Burma, has been demanding self-determination in the form of local autonomy and a federal democracy in Burma. Further talks are to be held between the two parties to discuss more substantive political issues, according to the original agreement. According to the recent official statement from the CNF, the discussions will be focused on mechanisms for cease-fire monitoring, peaceful resolution of conflict, fundamental human rights and the issues affecting the Chin diaspora.¹⁸

TWO MON POLITICAL PRISONERS RELEASED

Mon political prisoners Nai Yekkha and Nai Myo Thwe, who were sentenced to life in prison, were released on 30 April from Insein Prison and Thayarwaddy Prison to New Mon State Party (NMSP) Chairman Nai Htaw Mon after they were granted amnesty by President U Thein Sein. During the previous peace talks between the NMSP and government representatives, the NMSP repeatedly demanded their release. They were convicted on 17 July 2003 by the former Burmese junta—the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)—of plotting to overthrow State leaders. U Aye Myint, an attorney of Lan-pya-kyae (Guiding Star) Association, and the Eleven Sport Journal Editor Ko Zaw Thet Htew were also arrested at that time. According to one of the peace negotiators, the Union Minister for Electric Power U Zaw Min presented the prisoners to the NMSP Chairman and advised the party to work hard on the development projects. The Chairman Mon responded that development projects in Burma could only be realized once the political problems are solved.¹⁹

ANALYSIS

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s landmark address to the Union parliament in Nay Pyi Taw provided an overview of the framework for transition in Burma. While praising the President and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi for their achievements in promoting changes to the country, he also emphasised the need to address other important issues including providing assistance to those in the rural and deprived areas of the country. While the 1 April by-elections provided the opening of the new political landscape as Aung San Suu Kyi and a handful of NLD members take their places as MPs, the party will need to introduce and announce both its short and long-term strategies to the public in order to challenge the majority USDP in parliamentary discussions and in the 2015 elections.

While the peace process continues to forge ahead in many ethnic states and as the CNF conduct the second round of talks, concerns are still being raised about the situation in Kachin State as the Burmese Army escalates its offensive. Over the last week there has been a concerted push by the Burmese Army to take Laiza by 15 May. This is of critical concern not only for the Kachin, but also for the entire peace process.

¹⁸ CNF Delegation Arrives in Chin State for 2nd Round of Peace Talks - <http://chinlandguardian.com/news-2009/1785-cnf-delegation-arrives-in-chin-state-for-2nd-round-of-peace-talks.html> (Chinland Guardian) 2 May 2012

¹⁹ Two Mon political prisoners released to NMSP chairman - <http://monnews.org/?p=3864> (IMNA) 1 May 2012