

POLITICAL MONITOR NO.14

OFFICIAL MEDIA

BURMESE PRESIDENT ATTENDS BOAO FORUM IN CHINA

Chinese President Xi Jinping and U Thein Sein held talks on 5 April and pledged to boost the "all-round" cooperation between the two countries. "The two leaders exchanged views promoting bilateral relations the two countries as well as regional and international issues of common interest. The two also agreed to enhance strategic communication and take China-Burma/Myanmar relations forward in the right direction as well as friendly exchanges and cooperation in all areas, including parliaments, governments, political parties, militaries and law-enforcement departments and on governance matters were also discussed. The Burmese President also reiterated its firm commitment to the one China policy and pledged to continue to support the peaceful development of cross-strait relations. President Thein Sein also attended and addressed the Boao Forum 2013 Conference where former Japanese Prime Minister Mr Yasuo Fukuda, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Brunei Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzadin Waddaulah, and President of Kazakhstan Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev delivered inaugural speeches. Similarly, Heads of State/ Government of Finland, Mexico, Peru, Zambia, Australia, Cambodia, New Zealand, Algeria and Mongolia, the President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and the Managing Director of International Monetary Fund also gave speeches to the Forum. President Thein Sein also held meetings with the Head of China Non-ferrous Metal Mining Group Co Ltd Mr. Luo Tao, Secretary Mr. Luo Bao Ming of Hainan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party, Vice Governor Mr. Zhang Xiaoqin of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Head of CNPC Co Ltd Mr. Zhou Jiping and discussed on-going projects by the Chinese firms in Burma.¹

SINGAPOREAN PRESIDENT VISITS BURMA

Singaporean President Tony Tan Keng Yam arrived in Burma/Myanmar to begin a five day official to the country and the first by Singapore since both countries established diplomatic ties in 1966. The visit, marks deepening ties between the two countries since the reformist leader took office in 2011. During his visit, Tan met with his Burmese counterpart Thein Sein and the two leaders discussed Singapore's increased role in assisting the economic reforms in the country through investment, technology and human resources development. They also discussed Burma's political developments and further strengthening of bilateral ties between the two countries. President Tony Tan Keng Yam also met the Speaker of the Lower House, Thura U Shwe Mann and Chairperson of the Pyithu Hluttaw Rule of Law and Tranquility Committee Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The Presidential visit also witnessed the signing of a series of agreements between the two countries, ranging from sectors of telecommunications, hospitality, consumer, and business services as well as the opening of an IE Singapore's Overseas Centre in Yangon. The centre will facilitate trade and investment between Singapore and Myanmar in key sectors including infrastructure, industrial and urban development, transport and logistics, manufacturing and trading. The Singaporean President also

¹ President U Thein Sein leaves for China to attend Boao Forum for Asia 2013 – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 April 2013 (p. 1)/ Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping welcomes President U Thein Sein – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 April 2013 (p. 16)/ China has committed to sharing its development with regional countries – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 April 2013 (p. 1)/ Comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership taking shape between Myanmar and China – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 April 2013 (p. 16)/ Outcomes of the BFA Annual Conference 2013 will provide with great avenues for effective realization of economic reform process of Asia – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 April 2013 (p.1& 9)

visited the old capital Yangon and Mandalay the second largest city and commercial centre and was greeted by the Chief Ministers U Myint Swe and U Ye Myint respectively.²

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN MEETS INDONESIAN MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Hatta Rajasa called on Burmese President Thein Sein in Naypyitaw on 2 April and held discussions on promoting bilateral ties between Burma and Indonesia in agriculture, energy, mining and plantations, among other things. Mr Rajasa also held meeting with the Burmese Commerce Minister and matters related to signing of an MOU on rice trade, accelerating the growth of SMEs and increasing trade volume between the two countries with a target of US\$ 1000 million by 2016. Mr Rajasa and party also attended the Indonesian-Burma/Myanmar Business Forum jointly organized by the Indonesian Embassy and the Burmese Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) on 3 April in Yangon.³

FORMER US PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER IN BURMA

A US delegation led by former US President Mr Jimmy Carter arrived in Burma on 2 April and met Burmese President Thein Sein, Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services Snr. General Min Aung Hlaing. Their talks were focussed on the on-going reforms, internal peace process, the 2015 general elections and strengthening of ties between the two armed forces of Burma/Myanmar and the United States.⁴

LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER SHWE MANN PAYS OFFICIAL VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA.

A parliamentary delegation led by Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Thura U Shwe Mann paid an official visit to New Zealand and held talks with Speaker of House of Representatives of New Zealand Mr David Carter on 27 March. In their meeting, the two exchanged views on the

² Singaporean goodwill delegation arrives in Nay Pyi Taw –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 April 2013 (p. 1)/
President U Thein Sein welcomes Singaporean President Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam and wife –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 April 2013 (p. 16)/
President U Thein Sein invites Singaporean investment –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 April 2013 (p. 1)/
Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets Singaporean President Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam and party –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 April 2013 (p. 8)/
Singaporean President receives Chairperson of Pyithu Hluttaw Rule of Law and Tranquillity Committee –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 April 2013 (p. 8)/
Singaporean President, wife arrive in Mandalay –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 April 2013 (p.16)/
Singaporean delegation arrives in Yangon –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 April 2013 (p. 16)

³ President U Thein Sein meets Indonesian coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 April 2013 (p. 1)/
Myanmar, Indonesia to promote trade Volume –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 April 2013 (p. 1)/
Indonesia-Myanmar Business Forum and One on One Business held –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 April 2013 (p. 8)

⁴ Jimmy Carter arrives in Nay Pyi Taw –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 April 2013 (p. 1)/
Myanmar, US to further strengthen friendly ties, relations –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 April 2013 (p.1)/
UEC Chairman meets former US President Jimmy Carter –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 April 2013 (p. 9)/
Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw holds talks with former US President –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 April 2013 (p. 16)/
C-in-C receives former US President and wife –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 April 2013 (p.16)

democratization process, cooperation between the two parliaments further strengthening of friendship and bilateral ties between two governments and peoples. Thura Shwe Man also extended an invitation to Mr Carter to visit Burma. The Burmese parliamentary delegation also held talks with Ms Mayan Street, Chairperson of the Regulation Review Committee, Opposition Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs Mr Phil Goff and Minister for Primary Industries Mr Nathan Guy. Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and party also met representatives of ethnic races and organizations in Sydney and discussed the on-going political process in Burma.⁵

NORWEGIAN DELEGATION MEETS BURMESE LEADERS

President Thein Sein received the Norwegian delegation led by Minister for Trade and Industry Mr Trond Giske on 4 April at the Presidential Palace in Naypyitaw. Talks were focussed on the reforms, environmental conservation, mutual cooperation in information technology and communication and hydro-power projects in Burma. Mr Giske and party also called on Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann and discussed bilateral trade and investment, technical assistance, and strengthening cooperation between the two countries.⁶

YANGON SCHOOL FIRE KILLS 13 CHILDREN

A fire caused by faulty electrical equipment killed 13 boys at an Islamic school in Burma/Myanmar on Tuesday. However, following the recent outbreak of communal violence which began in Meiktila on 20 March and spread to at least 11 townships in Mandalay and Bago Regions, which left 43 dead, dozens injured and thousands homeless. Many observers are now harbouring suspicions as to what may have caused the fire. Rangoon Regional government has issued a statement vowing to take action against those responsible for the incident and a seven-member committee has been formed to probe the incident and submit its report in April.⁷ (*Please see Appendix A for the full text of the Formation of the Investigation Team*).

MINISTERIAL BODY FORMED TO MONITOR STATE EMERGENCIES

A 10-member Central Management Committee for Emergency Period to tackle the emergency crisis including the recent rioting in central Burma was formed under a Presidential Order. The committee is led by the Minister for Home Affairs and also includes the Minister at the President's Office U Aung Min and Police Chief Brigadier-General Kyaw Kyaw Tun as secretary. The committee is tasked with ensuring effective cooperation between the security forces and regional governments in making swift response to riots, preventing sectarian and religious riots and exposing main instigators.⁸ (*Please see Appendix B for full text of the Notification on the formation of the Central Management Committee for Emergency Period*).

DEPUTY PYITHU HLUTTAW SPEAKER RECEIVES MEMBER OF EU PARLIAMENT'S SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa received the EU parliamentary delegation led by member of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights Mrs Barbara Lochbihler. During the meeting, they discussed human rights, food security in the region and Myanmar MPs' visit to EU Parliament. Also present at the meeting together with the Deputy Speaker of Pyithu

⁵ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker asks support from New Zealand House of Representatives – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-03-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 March 2013 (p.1 & 8)

⁶ Myanmar, Norway to cooperate in hydropower generation – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 April 2013 (p.1)/
Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker meets scouts, Norwegian Trade and Industry Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 April 2013 (p.1 & 8)

⁷ Yangon school fire kills 13 children – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 April 2013 (p.16 & 8)

⁸ Formation of Central Management Committee for Emergency Period – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-03-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 March 2013 (p.1)

Hluttaw were chairmen of committees, secretaries, members of Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission and officials from the Hluttaw Office. The EU delegation during the visit also met with government officials, parliamentarians, and representatives of political parties, civil society and Opposition leader Aung San Su Kyi.⁹

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

KACHIN PEACE TALKS POSTPONED UNTIL LATE APRIL

A planned peace talks between scheduled to take place in Myitkyina between the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the government's Peace Making Work Committee has been postponed until late April. According to the Burma/Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC), the meeting was postponed since international observers invited by the KIO were unable to attend. At their last meeting held in Ruili, China, on March 11, both sides agreed to hold peace talks in late April.¹⁰

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN MAKES ADMINISTRATIVE RESHUFFLE

Burma's President Thein Sein has made his first major reshuffle of ministry officials and high-ranking civil servants since coming to power two years ago, as part of administrative reforms to clean up the government. Six high-ranking officials, including ex-colonels installed as heads of ministry departments by the former military regime, were forced to retire by a presidential order, while 40 other ministry officials were transferred to posts at other ministries. According to an official from the Presidential Office, six officials were forced to retire because of mismanagement or corruption, while others while some were hardliners opposing the current reform process. 40 other officials, including six directors from the Ministry of Commerce and one director from the Ministry of Information were also transferred as part of the reshuffle.¹¹

DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL PARLEY APPROVED BY ARMED MOVEMENTS

A two-day meeting of top leaders of major armed movements in Chiangmai has adopted the draft framework for political dialogue with Naypyitaw, according to a copy of the resolutions received by SHAN. "The said (draft framework) will be presented to and discussed with ethnic political parties before final endorsement," it reads. The 30-31 March meeting was attended by representatives from the following ethnic groups and movements:

- Arakan Army (AA)
- Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)
- Chin National Front (CNF)
- Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)
- Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)
- Karen National Union (KNU)
- Karen Peace Council (KPC)
- National Unity Party of Arakan (NUPA)
- New Mon State Party (NMSP)
- Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)
- Shan State Progress Party (SSPP)

⁹ Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives member of EU Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 April 2013 (p.16)/

European parliamentary delegation praises Myanmar's reforms – <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/3086-european-parliamentary-delegation-praises-myanmar-s-reforms> (Eleven News Media) 9 April 2013

¹⁰ Kachin peace talks postponed until late April – <http://mizzima.com/news/ethnic-issues/9191-kachin-peace-talks-postponed-until-late-april.html> (Mizzima) 5 April 2013

¹¹ President Thein Sein makes administrative reshuffle – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/31208> (Irrawaddy) 2 April 2013

The UNFC and the government's Union Peacemaking Work Committee (UPWC) are due to meet sometime this month, although the date has yet to be fixed. Specific topics covered in the proposed framework includes subjects such as:

- Core principles
- Roadmap (agreed by the Ethnic Conference in Chiangmai, 14-16 September 2012)
- Composition of the participants at the new Panglong or Union Conference
- Structure of the convening group
- Humanitarian assistance, Judicial reform, Land reform, Power sharing, Security and Constitutional federal democracy.

The meeting also decided that representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) should participate as expert consultants for relevant talking points.¹²

BURMA'S MINORITY LEADERS MEET JAPANESE GOVT

An alliance of armed ethnic minority groups from Burma Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe to discuss humanitarian assistance in ethnic regions inside the country. The United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), an alliance of 11 ethnic groups, sent 23 representatives to the meeting in Tokyo after receiving an invitation from the Nippon Foundation, a major Japanese philanthropist organization that recently pledged US \$3 million in emergency aid to Burma for one year. The ethnic leaders from Karen, Kachin, Karenni, Shan, Mon, Chin and Arakan states also met with Japan's deputy prime minister and foreign minister during the talks on April 1. At the meeting in Japan, Khun Okkar said ethnic representatives discussed ways of putting the Nippon Foundation's emergency aid to use in ethnic states and also discussed ways in using the funds for a long-term assistance project to promote health care, education and socially sustainable development. Although a budget has not been confirmed, the funds will be given to concerned donors and respective authorities in each ethnic region to promote development initiatives such as the construction of schools and clinics, Khun Okkar said. The Nippon Foundation plans to continue assisting the ongoing peace process between the government's peace delegation and armed ethnic minority groups by serving as an observer during negotiations. The foundation is also delivering rice and medicine to ethnic regions as part of its \$3 million aid package to promote peace in the country.¹³

ANALYSIS

The visits by foreign dignitaries including former US President Carter are signs that ties between Burma and the international community are slowly returning to normalcy. The Burmese President's meetings with the new leadership in Beijing once again reaffirm the importance of maintaining the special "phaukphaw" friendship and that Sino-Burma relations will remain strong. While the country's re-emergence on to the international scene has been making progress, a vast array of internal problems remain unresolved. President Thein Sein since taking office has been confronted with communal unrests in Rakhine State in 2012 and most recently in Meiktila. While the government has taken immediate steps to prevent future outbreaks from reoccurring, the reality shows that it has not been able to do so. Questions are now being asked on how best to resolve the conflict between Buddhist and Muslim communities. Until such issues of intra-community as well as reconciliation with ethnic minorities groups are addressed in a satisfactory manner Burma's democratization process will remain uncertain and fragile. The recent fire at a mosque in Yangon killing 13 children that raised concerns, once again highlights the sensitivity of the issue.

¹² Draft framework for political parley approved by armed movements – http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5337:draft-framework-for-political-parley-approved-by-armed-movements&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 4 April 2013

¹³ Burma's Minority Leaders meet Japanese Govt – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/31805> (Irrawaddy) 9 April 2013

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

**INVESTIGATION TEAM FORMED TO PROBE FIRE
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Yangon Region Government**

1. An investigation team comprising the following persons is formed to set up a probe into the death of the young boys in the fire occurred at a religious school of Yaykyaw mosque at Ma/183, 48th Street, Ward-10 of Botahtaung Township, at 3:00 am on 2 April.

Sr.	Name	Department	Portfolio
1.	U Toe Aung	Secretary , Yangon City Electricity Supply Board (YESB)	Leader
2.	U Kyi Win	Head of Yangon Region Fire Services Department	Member
3.	U Aung Kyi	Head of Yangon Religious Affairs Department	Member
4.	Police Lt-Col Thet Lwin	Deputy Commander Office, Yangon Region Police Force	Member
5.	U Hlaing Soe Thant	Deputy Commissioner of Yangon East District General Administration Department	Member
6.	U Hla Kyi	Assistant Chief Engineer, Yangon City Electricity Supply Board (YESB)	Member
7.	U Khaing Mye	Assistant Director, Yangon City Electricity Supply Board (YESB)	Member

2. The commission is to expose the cause of the fire and submit the report along with its reviews and suggestions not later than 5-4-2013.¹⁴

Appendix B:

**FORMATION OF CENTRAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR EMERGENCY
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
President Office**

Notification No. 34/2013

4th Waning of Tabaung 1374 ME, (30 March, 2013)

1. To control and handle the current rioting, the Central Management Committee for Emergency Period is formed with following personnel.

Sr.	Name	Current Portfolio	Appointed Position
1.	Lt-Gen Ko Ko	Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs	Chairman
2.	U Aung Min	Minister, Ministry of President Office (4)	Vice-Chairman
3.	U Ohn Myint	Minister, Ministry of Livestock & Fisheries	Member
4.	U Khin Yi	Minister, Ministry of Immigration & Population	Member
5.	U Win Myint	Minister, Ministry of Commerce	Member
6.	Commodore Aung Thaw	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Defence	Member
7.	Maj-Gen Zaw Win	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Border Affairs	Member
8.	U Ye Htut	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Information	Member
9.	U Phone Swe	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief & Resettlement	Member
10.	Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun	Chief of Myanmar Police Force/Deputy Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs	Secretary

¹⁴ Formation of Investigation Team –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-04-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 April 2013 (p.16)

2. The tasks of the Central Management Committee for Emergency Period are as follows:
- (a) to ensure effective cooperation between the security forces of the government;
 - (b) to join hands with regional governments in making swift response if riots occur;
 - (c) to carry out effective preparedness not to occur sectarian and religious riots again;
 - (d) to be able to prevent instigation across the country, to expose main instigators of riots and to take action against them;
 - (e) to form township, ward, village guards for the people-cantered police system in cooperation with Myanmar Police Force and
 - (f) to coordinate the tasks with the help of civil societies.
3. Region and state governments are also to form similar committees.

Sd/ Thein Sein
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar.¹⁵

¹⁵ Formation of Central Management Committee for Emergency Period –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-03-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 March 2013 (p.1)