
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 19

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT RECEIVES THAI GOODWILL DELEGATION LED BY SUPREME COMMANDER OF ROYAL THAI ARMED FORCES

President U Thein Sein received a Thai goodwill delegation led by Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces General Songkitti Jaggabatara at the President's Office on 8 June. Also present were Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services General Min Aung Hlaing, Union Minister for Defence Maj-Gen Hla Min, Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko, Union Minister for Border Affairs and for Myanmar Industrial Development Maj-Gen Thein Htay, Union Minister at the President's Office U Thein Nyunt, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint, Director-General at the President Office U Min Zaw, Director-General U Kyaw Kyaw of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Myanmar Military Attaché to Thailand. The Thai delegation was accompanied by Thai Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Apirath Vienravi and Military Attaché Colonel Prachern Chaiyakit.¹

DEFENCE SERVICES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MEETS SUPREME COMMANDER OF ROYAL THAI ARMED FORCES

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services General Min Aung Hlaing met the Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces General Songkitti Jaggabatara at Zeyathiri Beikman in Rangoon during his visit to Burma on 8 June. Those also in attendance included Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Lt-Gen Soe Win, Lt-Gen Hla Htay Win of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Vice-Admiral Nyan Tun, Commander-in-Chief (Air) of Defence Services, and the Military Attaché of Myanmar Embassy to Thailand. The Thai delegation was accompanied by Thai Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Apirath Vienravi and the Thai Military Attaché. The two sides discussed matters relating to the promotion of friendly relations between the armed forces, as well as cooperation between the two armed forces in order to ensure stability and peace in the border areas.²

PYIDAUNGSU HLUTTAW SPEAKER RECEIVES GERMAN HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AND HUMANITARIAN AID COMMISSIONER

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint received German Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid Markus Löning at Zabuthiri Meeting Hall in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 June. Also present were Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Mya Nyein, members of parliamentary committees and officials from the Hluttaw Office. Commissioner Löning was accompanied by German Ambassador to Myanmar Julius Georg Luy.³

While the issue of maintaining or lifting EU sanctions remains under debate, several countries within the EU have mooted the idea of re-assessing the current sanctions regime imposed on Burma. Prior to Commissioner Löning's visit, German MP Michael Glos (CSU) and officials from prominent German foundations were also recently received in Nay Pyi Taw.

¹ President U Thein Sein receives Thai goodwill delegation led by Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces General Songkitti Jaggabatara - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 June 2011 (p. 1)

² Defence Services C-in-C meets Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces General Songkitti Jaggabatara - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 June 2011 (p. 9)

³ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker receives German Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 June 2011 (p. 1)

UNION CHIEF JUSTICE RECEIVES UNICEF CHILD PROTECTION SECTION CHIEF

Chief Justice U Tun Tun Oo met UNICEF Child Protection Section Chief Jeannette Wijnants at the Union Supreme Court on 7 June. They discussed cooperation between the Union Supreme Court and UNICEF in jurisdiction over minors and protection of child rights, as well as programmes to be implemented through bilateral cooperation.⁴

UNICEF's work in Burma is based on its core commitments for children with programmes covering water, environmental sanitation and hygiene, health and HIV, nutrition, education and child protection within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

BORDER REGION COOPERATION AND ANTI-TRANS-BOUNDARY CRIME MEETING BETWEEN BURMA AND CHINA HELD

A Chinese delegation led by Deputy Minister Huang Ming of Public Security arrived in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 June to attend a border region cooperation and anti-trans boundary crime meeting. The meeting focussed on trans-boundary crime eradication along the border regions as well as boosting cooperation between the police forces. The Burmese side was represented by Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint, Chief of Myanmar Police Force Kyaw Kyaw Tun, directors-general of departments under the ministry and of Immigration and National Registration Department, and senior officers of the Myanmar Police Force.⁵

AYEYAWADY REGION TO ESTABLISH DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Chief Minister of Ayeyawady Region U Thein Aung gave the green light to set up a foundation to support development projects in the region. At the meeting on 6 June, the Chief Minister stressed the need for implementing reports of the people to gain their trust as well as the importance in setting up a foundation to work for the multi-purpose development of the economic and social sectors in Ayeyawady Region. The Chief Minister also discussed matters relating to the implementation of regional development tasks in districts and townships of the region.⁶

KACHIN STATE ASSIGNS DUTIES TO OFFICIALS

At a meeting to assign duties to carry out regional developments projects for 2011-2012 fiscal year in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, Chief Minister U La John Ngan Hsai called for the early implementation of projects of the five year plan, in order to meet targets in agriculture, industrial and service sectors. Head of Kachin State Planning Department U Than Tun reported on the plans for 2011-2012 based on the plans for 2010-2011. The chief minister assigned duties for 2011- 2012 fiscal year to state level departmental officials and administrators of District General Administration Departments.⁷

4 Union Chief Justice receives UNICEF Child Protection Section Chief - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 June 2011 (p. 1)

5 Border region cooperation and anti-transboundary crime meeting between Myanmar and China held - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 June 2011 (p. 8)

6 Ayeyawady Region to establish development foundation - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 June 2011 (p. 8)

7 Kachin State assigns duties to officials - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/NLM2011-06-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 June 2011 (p. 8)

OUTSIDE MEDIA

PARTIES FORM INTERIM ELECTION ALLIANCE

While no official announcement has yet to be made, due to rumours of by-elections later this year 11 political parties have established an alliance known as the Group of Democratic Party Friends (GDPPF). These include the National Democratic Force (NDF), the Union Democracy Party, the Democratic Party Myanmar, Democracy and Peace Party, Rakhine Nationalities Development Party, Chin National Party, Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, United Democracy Party, Patriotic National League for Democracy and National Political Alliances League.

Union Democracy Party Chairman Thein Tin Aung said that the committee had been formed to avoid making the same mistakes of the 2010 elections. He added that parties with similar political ideologies overlapped in constituencies, thereby effectively wasting votes and that a more organised front would be needed in order to rival the authority of the USDP party.

Rumours of an interim vote have circulated since the appointment of more than 40 MPs to cabinet posts and advisory committees following the first session of parliament in February. Under Burmese parliamentary legislation, those seats must be filled via a second round of voting. No details about the interim elections have been released, and it is not yet known whether anything has been finalised. The head of the Union Election Commission, Thein Soe, said in a recent parliamentary session, however, that they may be held October or November this year.⁸

ELECTION COMMISSION RECOGNIZES THEIN NYUNT AS INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE

The Lower House (Pyithu Hluttaw) has recognized MP Thein Nyunt, who was expelled by the National Democratic Force (NDF), as an independent MP, according to Khin Maung Swe, a member of the NDF political leadership committee. A copy of a letter that recognized Thein Nyunt as an independent MP was sent to the NDF by the Union Election Commission said Khin Maung Swe. He added that the letter, dated 31 May, was sent by the EC chairman to the Lower House speaker and copies were sent to the NDF and Thein Nyunt.

Before the 2010 election, some leading members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), who disagreed with the NLD decision to boycott the elections, formed the National Democratic Force. Four months later, the NDF Central Committee expelled Thein Nyunt for discussing the party's financial affairs in the media as well as other disagreements. Thein Nyunt went on to win the election as an NDF candidate. Later, the case was taken up by the EC. Meanwhile, Thein Nyunt, who was also elected in the 1990 election as an NLD candidate, created an alliance with a breakaway NDF group that includes Rangoon Region constituencies MPs Kyaw and San San Myint, Upper House MP Phone Myint Aung and Lower House MP Kyi Myint.⁹

THEIN NYUNT (NDF) TO FORM NEW POLITICAL PARTY

Joined by four other MPs, Thien Nyunt, who was expelled from the National Democratic Front (NDF), will form a new political party, after being officially declared on 6 June by Union Election Commission (UEC) an independent MP. Thein Nyunt will be joined by Upper House MP Phone Myint Aung and legislators Kyi Myint, U Kyaw and San San Myint from the Rangoon Regional Assembly. Thein Nyunt said he will apply to the Election Commission to form the party, and the name of the party, logo and seal will be announced at that time.

⁸ Parties form interim election alliance - <http://www.dvb.no/news/parties-form-interim-election-alliance/16004> (DVB) 7 June 2011

⁹ EC recognizes Thein Nyunt as Independent candidate: NDF - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/5373-ec-recognizes-thein-nyunt-as-independent-candidate-ndf.html> (Mizzima) 6 June 2011

“Our policies will be national reconciliation, democracy and human rights”, he said. “Under these three goals, we will undertake two tactical lines, to resolve political issues by political means and resolve issues within the framework of the law’. To finance the new party, lawmakers will contribute 10% of their MP allowance and the party will accept donations from supporters, said Thein Nyunt. He declined to say how many members the party had at the present time.

Meanwhile, Kaung Myat Htut, who contested as independent candidate and lost in the South Okkalapa constituency in the 2010 general election, is also planning to form a new party. “In the last election, our Myanmar Democracy Congress could not field the minimum requirement of three candidates due to financial constraints and our party was deregistered by the commission in accordance with the electoral laws”, explained Kaung Myat Htut. The Myanmar Democracy Congress was deregistered by the UEC because it failed to present a list of 1,000 party members as a minimum requirement.¹⁰

MUSLIM COMMUNITY PRESENTS DEMANDS TO STATE LEADER

At a meeting held in Maungdaw on the Bangladesh-Burma border on 6 June, 53 Muslim leaders submitted a letter with 5 demands to the Chief State Minister U Hla Maung Tin, including: 1) recognize Muslims as an ethnic nationality, 2) issue national ID cards, 3) allow free travel for Muslims, 4) remove restrictions on marriage, and 5) allow renovation of mosques. According to locals, the meeting was conducted for the Muslim leaders by the Chief Minister and attended by about 100 people.

"Prime Minister U Hla Maung Tin responded to the letter in the meeting but did not agree to fulfil all the demands. But, he instructed the director of the immigration department to issue traveling documents to the Muslim community. He also said issuing national identity cards would be impossible right now, as he needs permission from the central government," said a senior official on condition of anonymity. Muslims in northern Arakan (Rakhine) State have been facing many restrictions imposed by local government authorities, such as not being allowed to travel or marry without permission, and bans on the renovation of mosques.¹¹

2 RNDP MPs WIN ELECTION FRAUD CASE

Two Rakhine National Development Party (RNDP) elected representatives were declared innocent of charges of election fraud filed by USDP candidates by the Union Election Commission in Nay Pyi Taw on 15 June, who found that they had not breached any existing electoral laws. "The Union Election Commission passed a verdict yesterday that two elected representatives, U Ohn Tin and U Kyaw Lwin, are not guilty, and the commission rejected the allegations of USDP candidates against them," said U Ba Shin, a representative of the People's Parliament from the RNDP. U Ohn Tin is the Amyotha Hluttaw representative from Kyaukpru Township, while U Kyaw Lwin is an Arakan State Hluttaw representative from the same township. Both were charged, along with 7 other RNDP lawmakers on several counts, including slander of the government, that were levelled by USDP candidates after they lost the election. "The accusations made by the USDP candidates were found to be false, and the commission has now ordered the USDP candidates to pay one million kyat each in compensation to the RNDP representatives," U Ba Shin said.¹²

¹⁰ Thein Nyunt, four other lawmakers, to form new political party - <http://mizzima.com/news/election-2010/5391-thein-nyunt-four-other-lawmakers-to-form-new-political-party.html> (Mizzima) 9 June 2011

¹¹ Muslim community presents demands to State leader - <http://www.narinjara.com/details.asp?id=2982> (Narinjara) 7 June 2011

¹² Two RNDP MPs Gain Victory in Election Fraud Case – <http://www.narinjara.com/details.asp?id=2991> (Narinjara) 16 June 2011

ANALYSIS

The new government in Nay Pyi Taw is receiving a steady stream of visitors from neighbouring countries as well as from the West, including the US and the EU. While U Thein Sein and his government seem to be gaining acceptance, concrete steps to implement promised changes have yet to be taken. The visits also seem to be taking place when fighting on the borders has intensified – in Kachin State, Shan State and Karen State. The international community needs to pay more attention to these developments while exploring possibilities to engage with the government. Otherwise, Nay Pyi Taw may well conclude that it can deal with the ethnic groups as it likes and it will be business as usual. Time and again, the need for the government to dialogue with all stakeholders have been underlined but it has never transpired. The government needs to find a durable political solution if it wants to meet the needs of the country and people.