
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 33

OFFICIAL MEDIA

US SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR BURMA DEREK MITCHELL MEETS BURMESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, DISCUSSES ARMED FORCES COOPERATION

During his recent visit to Burma, US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma Derek Mitchell discussed cooperation of the armed forces of the US and Burma with the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services General Min Aung Hlaing in Yangon on 3 November. Those also present at the meeting 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 Commander-in-Chief, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Vice-Admiral Nyan Tun, Commander-in-Chief (Air) Lt-Gen Myat Hein and Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe of the Office of Commander-in-Chief (Army), as well as US Military Attaché Colonel Brey Sloan and US State department officials.¹

Mitchell also met Foreign Affairs Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin in Nay Pyi Taw on 2 November, accompanied by US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour Michael H Posner, and discussed matters relating to promotion of bilateral relations and mutual interests.²

While in Yangon, US Assistant Secretary of State Posner met as well the Chairman of the Myanmar Human Rights Commission U Win Mya³ and representatives of civil society groups.

GERMAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS BURMA

A German delegation led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Werner Hoyer met Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Thura U Shwe Mann at the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 November. During the meeting, the two sides discussed strengthening the friendship and cordial relations between Burma and Germany and boosting bilateral cooperation.⁴

Deputy FM Hoyer also met Foreign Affairs Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin and discussed further cementing the relationship as well as the promotion of bilateral cooperation between the two countries.⁵

HLUTTAW SESSIONS (45th to 46th day) – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) session:

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

- **A proposal to build mutual trust and conduct negotiations in the Kachin State for the resettlement and safety of refugees caused by the current armed conflicts in Kachin State** was raised by Daw Dwe Bu of N'Jianguang constituency (UDPKS).

¹ C-in-C General Min Aung Hlaing receives US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2011 (p. 10)

² Union FM receives US Special Representative - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 November 2011 (p. 16)

³ Myanmar Human Rights Commission Chairman meets US Assistant Secretary of State - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2011 (p. 2)

⁴ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets German Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2011 (p. 5)

⁵ Union FM receives German Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2011 (p. 2)

- Daw Dwe Bu said that the two sides should make an immediate ceasefire and start peace talks before the conflict deteriorates and that efforts should be made to allow refugees to return to their homes.
- Regarding the proposal, U Myo Swe of Tanai constituency (USDP), U Than Oo of Myawady constituency (USDP), U Se Ki Kaw of Mongkhat Constituency (USDP), U Ye Htut Tin of Hpasauing constituency (USDP) and U Tun Aung Kyaw of Ponnagyun constituency (RNDP) discussed that it was the desire of the people to live peaceful life in the democratic country.
- They urged the KIO/KIA to adopt a peaceful approach and to negotiate for peace in the Kachin State and stressed that national unity is the sine qua non for emergence of a modern and developed nation.

Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Thein Htay said that:

- The Government had always embraced the objective of serving in the interests of the people. The security of the people, prevalence of law and order and bringing about peace and development are objectives of the Government. Only when peace was made, would law and order be prevailed and would the country be on road to development. The way of armed struggle would destroy the peace, and it was a challenge of the country that resolving the political issue, which was caused by consequences of the past, by armed struggle.
- The Government had made concerted efforts to stop armed conflict between the the Myanma Tatmadaw and KIA since it broke out on 9 June 2011 and to make peace. The Kachin State peace and stability committee has held talks with the Union Government on three occasions. The Union Government complied with the demands of the KIO and drafted a ceasefire agreement, which was then conveyed to local Kachin community leaders to attend a signing ceremony to endorse the agreement.
- As the KIO/KIA postponed the signing of agreement with a reason for restoring peace under the leadership of UNFC by stepping up its political aspiration, the peace making process faces a dilemma.
- The Union Government has no attitude to solve the problems among the national brethren with arms, holding the concept to coordinate among them with genuine benevolence, farsightedness and sympathy to be able to build the eternal peace. Thus, the Union Government issued Announcement No.1/2011 on 18.08.2011 to offer an olive branch to all national race armed groups that have not transformed yet in accord with the Constitution.
- The Union Government has expressed its desire to cease armed conflicts in Kachin State, secure the life of people and ensure eternal peace and development. Therefore, the Government firmly believes that problems are to be solved peacefully by building mutual trust. The process for peace talk is always opened. If KIA/KIO offers to make peace, the Government on its part is ready to accept the talks. The Government deeply believes that discussions to seek answers between both sides can restore eternal peace.⁶

⁶ Second regular session of first Pyithu Hluttaw continues for 45th Day/One new proposal submitted and discussed, one bill sought for approval – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 November 2011 (p. 16, 8 & 9)

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) Session:

One of the key issues during the session included:

- A **proposal to form a joint committee with equal number of representative from Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw under Amyotha Hluttaw Rules 76(a) and a commission and committees, regarding the proposal to appeal against and reverse the resolution offending bills approved or deemed to be approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to the Constitutional Tribunal to vet bills and to clarify if they are in line with the Constitution** was submitted by Daw Khin Waing Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency (1) (NDF).

The Hluttaw decided not to discuss the proposal.⁷

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

NUP TO CONTEST LOOMING BY-ELECTION

Burma's once military-aligned National Unity Party (NUP) will field around 20 candidates in the upcoming by-elections, originally slated for November 2011. NUP spokesperson Han Shwe said that work was already underway to seek out the constituencies where the NUP will gain the most support and also monitor public opinion on rival parties in competing constituencies. Despite being one of the more prominent parties competing in the national elections last year, the NUP managed to secure only 65 seats from 999 candidates fielded. With 48 seats in play during the by-elections, Han Shwe believes that the NUP has a good chance of gaining more seats for its members. He added that his party would enter the by-elections if they are announced in advance and if given enough time to prepare.⁸

KACHIN ELDERS MEET PEOPLE TO SEEK VIEWS

Kachin militia leader La Sang Aung Wa and Upper House MP Za Khon Tein Ring (Chipwi/Tsawlaw and Injangyang (4) Constituency - Independent) recently met local community leaders, Christian leaders and NGO officials in the Kachin State capital Myitkyina to seek the views of the people regarding the on-going fighting between the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Burmese government troops. While a negotiated settlement remains elusive, the two met locals in Myitkyina in a bid to put pressure on the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and stated that the government wanted to propose a peaceful resolution to the conflict. A local pastor who attended the meeting said that the KIO also shared the same desire and wanted a genuine cease-fire and a political dialogue to take place. The meeting ended without an agreement. While the central government seeks a cease-fire, KIO officials have reiterated their position and called for an open political dialogue based on equality to stop the civil war and solve problems regarding ethnic affairs.⁹

ANALYSIS

US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma Derek Mitchell's meeting with Burmese government officials will serve as a platform in restoring relations back to normalcy after years of tension between the two countries. The meeting between the US Special Representative and the Burmese Armed Forces Chief as well as the idea of promoting cooperation between the armed

⁷ Second regular session of Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 45th day/One bill and one proposal submitted – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2011 (p. 9)

⁸ NUP to contest looming by-election - <http://www.dvb.no/news/nup-to-contest-looming-by-election/18613> (DVB) 9 November 2011

⁹ Kachin people's militia and Upper House MP collect people's views - <http://mizzima.com/special/kachin-battle-report/6168-kachin-peoples-militia-and-upper-house-mp-collect-peoples-views.html> (Mizzima) 10 November 2011

forces of the two countries will be welcomed in Nay Pyi Taw. While it is unlikely that cooperation between the armed forces will take place in the foreseeable future, the mere fact that the issue was raised during this recent meeting will play a pivotal role in promoting a better understanding between the US and Burma.

The visit by the German Deputy Foreign Minister to Burma comes at a time when Europe is battling with the Euro financial crisis. The visit, while aiming to promote bilateral relations, could also be seen by critics as an attempt to secure business deals with the new Nay Pyi Taw government.

President U Thein Sein, since coming to office earlier this year, has undertaken measures to introduce reforms and changes to the country, but the international community will be watching to see how they are implemented. The crisis in Kachin State continues to be of concern.