

POLITICAL MONITOR NO.24

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT MAKES NATION-WIDE ADDRESS

During a radio address to the nation on 2 July, President Thein Sein said that the World Economic Forum held last month had helped to reconnect with world markets and to promote Myanmar to international investors. He stated that it was the first time that Myanmar had hosted such a Summit and the attendance by heads of global leaders and experts was a strong indication by the international community to work with Myanmar. He also welcomed the decision taken by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in lifting all sanctions and restoring full membership to Myanmar and provides opportunities in strengthening its economic development.

The President also urged the media that the right of freedom of expression should be exercised with care and a constructive purpose and more importantly taking into account the prevailing political dynamics in Myanmar. He continued by urging the international media to consider the Myanmar's reform process has had to contend with many facets including its multicultural makeup and historical events and that his intention "is not to ignore internationally accepted democratic norms," but to encourage "constructive observations and advice". In conclusion, the President explained the peace-building work being carried out by the government and the continued efforts being made with the KNU and KNPP and other ethnic groups in building trust to achieve peace.¹ (*Please see Appendix A for full statement of President Thein Sein's address*).

NEW ZEALAND TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING MYANMAR'S REFORM PROCESSES

A delegation led by Honourable Murray McCully, Foreign Affairs Minister of the New Zealand, called on President Thein Sein at Presidential Palace in Naypyitaw on 4 July. The two leaders held talks on providing assistance to victims in Rakhine State by the government, UN agencies and donor countries, food, accommodation and security, reconstruction of schools, hospitals and clinics, needs for farm development and fishery industry. The delegation also held meetings with the Speaker of the Lower House Thura Shwe Mann and Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin and exchanged views on further strengthening relations and cooperation between the two parliaments and the two countries.²

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 4th day meeting on 28 June. At the session, Minister at the President Office Aung Min gave clarifications on **the peace-making process** and Immigration Minister Khin Yi on **the Oslo Forum** held in Norway. In responding to the clarifications; Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann said that the points raised by the two ministers contributed a lot to the interest of the State and the people and efforts for peace-making process as aspire by the people, and they are thus to be put on record and also called on Ministers U

¹ Developments to peace-building process bringing prospect of lasting peace desired by citizens, step by step closer into view –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-02-red.pdf> (NLM) 2 July 2013 (p. 1)

² New Zealand to continue supporting Myanmar's reform processes –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 July 2013 (p. 1)/

Myanmar, New Zealand eye further strengthening relations, cooperation –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 July 2013 (p. 8)/

Union FM receives New Zealand counterpart –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 July 2013 (p. 8)/

Thein Zaw, U Aung Min, vice-chairmen of the relevant committee and Vice-Senior General Soe Win who are engaged in peace-making process to put an end to armed conflicts;

- Regarding the Oslo Forum, Minister Khin Yi clarified that as member of the Union Peace-making Work Committee attended the Forum from 18 to 19 June, and the Myanmar delegation held **discussions with foreign ministers of Norway and Brazil, Chair of the ICJ, Peace Adviser Minister to the Philippine President, mediator of Philippine MILE Peace Group and former Malaysian Intelligence Chief, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy Vijay Nambia**;
- The Myanmar delegation also briefed the forum on the current peace process in Myanmar during a roundtable discussion;
- General Hla Htay Win a member of the delegation also stated that **the Tatmadaw participated in the peace process in accordance with the guidance of the President and effort being made to turn the Tatmadaw into a standard army**. A member of the delegation Phado Kwe Htoo Win of KNU gave a briefing on **trust-building initiatives with the government, drafting codes of conduct, teaching of Karen literature and cooperation and Mon Women Affairs In-charge Mi Kon Chan Mon** discussed **the participation of women in the peace-making process**;
- The session **approved the Bill amending the National Food Law with the amendments of the Bill Committee.**³

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 5th day meeting on 2 July. At the session, Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann explained the **undertakings in convening a session of National Defence and Security Council as quickly as possible, which was sent to the President on 25 June. The key points included called for relentless efforts for peace, coordination for coming out of fruitful results, all-inclusiveness and use of local funds and assistances alone in the peace-making processes and review of negative impacts that can cause a danger to people's life and security.**⁴

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 6th day meeting on 3 July. During the session, 10 questions were answered and 1 bill submitted. Key issues raised at the session included the following:

- In his reply regarding the questions on **security and narcotic drugs**, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint said that **actions were being taken against any illegal organizations that are carrying out disturbance acts, causing negative impact on the interest of the country and its people after making necessary investigations**;
- On the **question on formation of more anti-riot squads and giving trainings**, the Deputy Minister stated that **police battalions had been formed to quell violence and riots and plans were underway to form one more battalion in Meiktila and to add three more security companies to auxiliary forces in Naypyitaw and states and regions and after modifying the current anti-riot manual, police forces throughout the country would be reformed in accordance with the new manual.**⁵

³ Clarifications at Oslo Forum contribute a lot to the State and the people: Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-29-red.pdf> (NLM) 29 June 2013 (p. 16 & 9)

⁴ Life-saving of victims who sustain life-threatening injuries bill-2013 submitted – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-03-red.pdf> (NLM) 3 July 2013 (p.16)

⁵ Police will be trained for quell violence and riots in accord with modified manual: Deputy Home Affairs Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-04-red.pdf> (NLM) 4 July 2013 (p. 1)

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 7th day meeting on 4 July. Key issues raised during the session included the following:

- The Printing and Publishing Enterprise Bill submitted by the Ministry of Information with amendments was approved at the session. MP U Thein Nyunt Thingangyun Constituency and U Khaing Maung Yi of Ahlon Constituency stated that the bill served “As fourth pillar and had a crucial role in the democratization processes and that the law could serve to protect publishers, and would bring benefits to people, printers and publishers.”⁶

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 7th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 4th day meeting on 28 June. The following issues were raised and answered during the session;

- The candidature lists of the Joint Committee for ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) and Joint Committee for Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), which will be formed under Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, was submitted and approved;
- U Myo Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency No.6 submitted the proposal on compilation of analyses of rates, which could be used in construction of basic infrastructures in the country.⁷

The 7th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 5th day meeting on 2 July. During the session the following issues were raised and approved:

- new members of Finance and Legal Affairs Commission was approved at the Hluttaw session;
- the Customer Protection Bill submitted by Union Minister for Commerce U Win Myint was approved for discussion;
- Seven MPs held discussions on the proposal on necessary measures and actions taken for enforcement of “the control of smoking and consumption of tobacco products law”;
- The Communications Bill submitted by Deputy Minister for Communications and Information Technology U Win Than was approved by the session.⁸

The 7th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 6th day meeting on 3 July. During the session 3 questions and 2 bills raised and discussed and 2 proposals approved:

- the Bill regarding Waterway Transport submitted by Deputy Minister for Transport U Han Sein was seconded by two representatives and approved by the session;
- U Myo Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency No (6), submitted a proposal highlighting the importance of accurate agricultural statistics while comprehensive efforts were in progress to boost agricultural produce. U Hla Swe of Magway Constituency supported the proposal and later approved by the session.⁹

⁶ Printing and Publishing Enterprise Bill approved –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 July 2013 (p. 16)

⁷ Proposal on compilation of analyses of rates Submitted –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-06-29-red.pdf> (NLM) 29 June 2013 (p. 16)

⁸ Communication Bill approved at today's Amyotha Hluttaw session –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-03-red.pdf> (NLM) 3 July 2013 (p. 16)

⁹ A&I Ministry supports proposal to recheck stats and facts of irrigable land areas for accuracy in agricultural statistics –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-04-red.pdf> (NLM) 4 July 2013 (p. 1)

The 7th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 7th day meeting on 4 July. During the session the following issues were raised and answered:

- U Ye Myint of Bago Region Constituency No.4 discussed the proposal **on adopting policies for implementation of ICT** submitted by Dr Myint Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No.8. Regarding the proposal Deputy Minister for Communications and Information Technology U Win Than stated that **the proposal should be implemented in the interest of the nation**;
- U Nyunt Tin of Yangon Region Constituency No.2 and U San Pyae of Kachin State Constituency No.7 discussed the proposal on **extension of consulates-general and honorary consuls for promotion of international trade with Myanmar** submitted by Dr Khin Shwe of Yangon Region Constituency No.9. Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Zin Yaw explained that arrangements would be made for submission on more establishments of consulates-general and honorary consuls.¹⁰

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Session

The 7th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convened its 1st day session on 1 July. In his opening speech, Speaker U Khin Aung Myint of Myint called on **MPs to accelerate efforts for strengthening democracy with due respect to the Constitution and existing laws including Hluttaw law and bylaws and to serve the public**. Other key issues raised and approved during the session included the following:

- Minister for Culture U Aye Myint Kyu clarified the procedures on ratification of the **Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970**;
- Union Minister for Finance and Revenue U Win Shein informed the Hluttaw that **Myanmar had been urged to be a member of Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency-MIGA by World Bank and that membership would bring better cooperation with members of World Bank group as well as facilitating inflow of foreign investments.**¹¹

VICE PRESIDENT ADDRESSES ANTI-CORRUPTION MEETING

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham addressed a work coordination meeting of the Anti-Corruption Committee held in Naypyitaw on 1 July. In his address the Vice-President called for implementing the work efficiently and effectively, warning that although bribery and corruption carried different meanings, punitive actions would be taken in accord with the law as both breaches the Rule of Law. He also called for cooperation with international community as it is hard to address corruption which is a global concern alone. He stressed the need to cooperate with regional countries, ASEAN countries and international organizations like Transparency International while relying on public complaints in a fight against corruption. He urged to expose corruption cases and to develop public awareness in cooperation with civil societies and reliable media. He continued that although corruption was defined as a problem found in government organizations, embezzlements of development funds and international donations had become frequent in conflict-stricken areas and disaster-hit regions at the present time; that such kind of corruption was widespread in the world poorest countries; that it was called stealing from the public purse; that corruption in business world

¹⁰ Undeveloped land plots from companies to be allotted to investors –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 July 2013 (p. 16)

¹¹ Lawmakers to fulfil wishes and aspirations more of the people through utilization of knowledge and experiences –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-02-red.pdf> (NLM) 2 July 2013 (p.16 & 9)

made honest merchants poor. He added that corruption undermined national dignity and dignity of each and every person of the country and that corruption could hinder development, international recognition and foreign investments of Myanmar with young democracy. He called on the committee to accomplish its mission with the help effective mechanism, saying that the Ministry of Home Affairs was a suitable mechanism. He stressed the need to find out the root cause of corruption and to heighten the public awareness of corruption on a wider scale while implementing the task.¹²

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

RENEWED VIOLENCE IN RAKHINE STATE

Clashes between the Buddhist and Muslim residents in Thandwe, a district town of southern Arakan, the authority on Sunday imposed night time curfew in the locality. The confrontation took place between the two communities in the afternoon following a rumour that an Arakanese girl was raped by two Muslim individuals on 29 June. According to local sources, a young woman from Taungup complained in the police station that she was raped by two Muslim men. As the news spread among the people in the town the clash started between the Buddhist and Muslim residents. Two houses from Myo Thit quarter were also set to fire in the clash and some tea houses and groceries stores were also destroyed. The deputy information minister Ye Htut confirmed the burning of two houses in Thandwe during the clashes. One accused has already been detained by the police, another source said. It was followed by heavy deployment of security forces in the locality that helped to bring the situation under control and night curfew has been imposed in Thandwe and surrounding areas.¹³

KIO TO REOPEN LIAISON OFFICE IN MYITKYINA

The Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) is set to reopen its liaison office to facilitate talks with the government two years after fighting shut the site down, a sign that talks to forge a cease-fire are still on track despite fresh clashes. According to San Aung, a member of the government-Kachin Peace Coordination Group (KPCG), the KIO liaison office will be reopened in Myitkyina, capital of the Kachin State. The KIO has already selected the members of a team that will be working with the government's peace working committee, he said. The revival of the office, which was shut down in 2011 after a 17-year peace agreement between Myanmar troops and Kachin rebels broke down, came after the two sides signed a preliminary cease-fire agreement in May aimed at ending hostilities. "The members of KIO Technical Team will work on preparing for discussions with the government ... and political talks will be held in this office and will include Colonel Gaw Lula Aung, Colonel Sin Wa, Colonel Kun Naung, Sergeant Daung Kha and 10 others."¹⁴

ANALYSIS

President Thein Sein in addressing the nation has reaffirmed that the on-going democratic reforms will not return to the dark days of the previous ruling military junta. However, the latest communal unrests in Thandwe, Rakhine State and past communal clashes have raised concerns about the fragility of the Burmese democratic reforms and the President's appeals to end communal violence

¹² Corruption can hamper development, international recognition and foreign investments of Myanmar with young democracy –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-02-red.pdf> (NLM) 2 July 2013 (p. 1 & 8)

¹³ Night curfew imposed in Thandwe after communal clashes –

<http://www.narinjara.com/main/index.php/night-curfew-imposed-in-thandwe-after-communal-clashes/> (Narinjara) 1 July 2013

¹⁴ Kachin Rebels to Reopen Liaison Office in Myitkyina –

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/kachin-07012013185149.html> (RFA) 1 July 2013

are less than convincing given the absence of any government measures to stem anti-Muslim sentiments and prevent future outbreaks from reoccurring. These underlying tensions that are rooted in discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities pose a threat to Myanmar's democratic transition and stability and the international community at large is watching to see how the reformist government will handle these challenges.

The call by Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann for the direct of involvement of Parliament in the on-going peace process and the unusual step in calling a meeting of the country's National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) are signs reflecting the growing role of the legislature in Myanmar politics. More importantly, such steps are being seen more as Shwe Mann raising questions on the President's handling of the on-going peace talks but more importantly signalling that a political rivalry between the two leaders could be developing. However, it is important to remember that in the lead up to the 2015 elections both President Thein Sein and Speaker Shwe Mann will need the support of not only the USDP party but also the allegiance of the military in order that their political ambitions can be a reality. While talks of rivalries between the government and Parliament as well as power dynamics gradually emerging between prominent political figures, it is important to remember that an inclusive political process is a pre-requisite and a must in achieving democracy. It is the government, together with political parties, ethnic nationalities and the people who need to work together in deciding the way forward for Myanmar.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN'S SPEECH

My Fellow Citizens,

I would like to inform you all of the developments that have taken place in our country in the month of June just as I have done previously on this radio program. Out of all the reforms that my government is currently carrying out, all of you are aware that we are working hard to realize what most of you desire—economic development—with a modern national framework. Towards this goal, we hosted the World Economic Forum East Asia Summit at Nay Pyi Taw to reconnect with world markets and to promote Myanmar to international investors. It is the first time Myanmar has hosted a Summit of this nature and caliber. We should all be proud as a nation to be able to successfully host a Summit that was attended by internationally recognized leaders and experts in political and economic realms. I am sure most of you also noticed that those who were in attendance—both the current leaders and the young global leaders who will become important figures in international relations in the future—had lively discussions relating to economic development in Myanmar. This is a strong indication that the international community is watching and is interested in working together with us as we strive to reconnect with the global community. The theme of the Summit— Courageous Transformation for Inclusion and Integration —also conforms with what we are trying to accomplish with regards to the peace process and resource sharing as linked to the overall economic development. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the committee members who were tasked with organizing the Summit, experts, civil servants, university students who volunteered their time, and everyone who took the responsibility to make this Summit a success.

I am, however, saddened to learn about the events in Malaysia where our fellow citizens who are working in that country were attacked. My heart goes out to the relatives and loved ones of the victims of these attacks. A critical lesson we must draw from these events is that our actions at home have impact on our fellow citizens living and working abroad. Extremist acts by a small group of individuals that uses religion as an excuse to cause fear, spreads hatred between different faiths, and promotes personal political or economic gain from the suffering of others have international impact on the safety and well-being of our fellow citizens. As a nation, we will be resolute in taking action in accordance with our laws against those who spread fear and deepen hatred between groups and communities of different beliefs and we will work hard to prevent future occurrence of such crimes. At the same time, there is a need to strengthen the capacities of our diplomatic missions abroad so that they can better protect and promote the safety and well-being of our fellow citizens who are striving under very hard conditions in foreign lands. However, I am also heartened to see not only our traditional way of people helping people, but local and international civil society and private sector organizations doing what they can to help in these hard times.

To strengthen our efforts to bring about economic development, my government is also working hard for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed on our country. Just this month, the International Labor Organization (ILO) lifted all sanctions and restored full membership to Myanmar. The ILO was impressed with Myanmar's progress on many fronts including peacefully resolving labor disputes and creating mechanisms for discussions among relevant stakeholders, enacting and implementing laws safeguarding labor rights, and tackling forced labor. Full membership of the ILO will aid not only our country's economic development but also strengthen safeguards of labor rights.

I have been made aware that the July 1, 2013 issue of Time Magazine is causing much anguish and conflict among the public. The cover story of the magazine depicting a few individuals, who are

acting contrary to most Myanmar, is creating misconceptions of Buddhism, a religion practiced by the majority of Myanmar's population. In connection with this matter, my government accepts that as the country takes its initial steps towards democracy, there may be different points of view expressed by sections of the public and national and international media. Indeed, you will be aware that I have worked to restore freedom of expression, accept plurality of opinions and reinvigorate civil society. However, like the Myanmar adage "no matter how true a statement, it should not be said if it will not be beneficial and constructive", I strongly believe that the right of freedom of expression should be exercised in light of the prevailing delicate political dynamics and for a constructive purpose. Therefore, I urge you to use the Time Magazine article as an opportunity to focus on constructive approaches, consensus building, and calming outbreaks of violence. I particularly would like to urge the international media to consider that our reform process must contend with many facets including our multicultural makeup and historical events. I must also stress that the measure of success of the reform process must be one that accounts for the short time of 26 months that we have had to work with. In making these points, my intention is to not ignore internationally accepted democratic norms but rather to invite constructive observations and advice.

Next, I will like to talk briefly about the peace-building work undertaken in June. During this month, I met with a RCSS/SSA delegation led by the group's chairman. We also continue to discuss with the KNU and KNPP, and have increased trust building efforts to aid with peace-building. You will be happy to hear that these developments to our peace-building process are bringing the prospect of lasting peace desired by our citizens, step by step closer into view. I understand that you all wish to live freely, without any unnecessary burdens, and have a secure livelihood. I will do everything I can to create a better life not only for you all but also for all future generations.¹⁵

¹⁵ Developments to peace-building process bringing prospect of lasting peace desired by citizens, step by step closer into view –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/NLM-2013-07-02-red.pdf> (NLM) 2 July 2013 (p. 1)