
POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 3

OFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT PEACE-MAKING GROUP MEETS KACHIN REPRESENTATIVES

The Union level peacemaking group led by U Aung Thaung met with political representatives from the KIO (Kachin Independence Organization) on 18 and 19 January 2012 in the Chinese border town of Ruili to end months of armed clashes in the northern state. The KIO delegation was led by U Swam Luk Gam, U La Phai La, U Jee Nawng, U La Jaung Khong Lwam, U N Gan Zaw Khwam, U Khun Nawng, U La Phai Zaw Raw and U Maran Zaw Tawng.

Afterwards, both sides issued the following statement which called for continued meetings and discussions through political means to achieve lasting peace, build trust, and reduce clashes:

- (1) The Union level peace-making group and the KIO representatives held a meeting in Ruili of the People's Republic of China on 18 and 19 January 2012 with the aim of ensuring stability and eternal peace of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
- (2) The Government and KIO will continue the negotiation between them through political means.
- (3) They will issue correct information of the meeting to the public.
- (4) They will coordinate matters related to military units of both sides in the hot spots, to control military activities and building trust.¹

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In advance of the meetings, the KIO's Deputy General Secretary No. 2 Lah Nan said that talks would focus on the political root cause of the current conflict between the KIO and the government forces as opposed to dealing directly with matters relating to a ceasefire. "We welcome peace talks if the central government invites us," he said. "We will not accept official talks based on the 2008 constitution, instead we stand by our position that political problems must be solved through the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC)." Several of Burma's key armed ethnic groups including the KIO and Karen National Union (KNU) formed the UNFC as a political alliance in 2010 with the aim of compelling the Burman-led central government to reform the country into a genuine federal union with equal rights among all ethnic groups and the Burman majority. Regarding the on-going fighting taking place in the Kachin State, the KIO issued a statement in which the group reiterated the group's desire for a truly democratic and federal Burma. The statement, signed by the KIO's central committee, said that the KIO will participate in the above negotiations in order to achieve equal rights and self-determination for the Kachin people.²

UNION LEVEL PEACE-MAKING GROUP AND RCSS/SSA SIGN INITIAL PEACE AGREEMENT

A peace-agreement was signed between the Union level peace-making group and RCSS/SSA (Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army) during a recent meeting held in Taunggyi, the capital of the Shan State on 16 January 2012. The two sides discussed matters relating to territorial designation and the opening of economic and liaison offices, after which an 11 point agreement was

¹ Union level peace-making group meets representatives of KIO/Both sides issue statement on peace process - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-20.pdf> (NLM) 20 January 2012 (p. 16)

² Burma government and KIO meet in China for talks - <http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2218-burma-govt-and-kio-meet-in-china-for-talks.html> (K.N.G) 18 January 2012

signed in the presence of Union Minister and Chief Negotiator of the Government's Peace Making Team U Aung Min and U Sai Baung Khe representing the RCSS/SSA.³

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The 11 points of the signed agreement are:

1. SSA will set up its main offices in Ho Mong, southern Shan State, and Monghta, eastern Shan State.
2. SSA and the Burmese government's negotiating team will continue to discuss on the resettlement and accommodation arrangement of SSA members and families.
3. SSA will be responsible for the administration of its forces. Burma government and SSA will work together in the administration at the township level.
4. Burma army will cooperate with SSA for the security of the two towns where SSA main offices will be established.
5. SSA and Burma army will work together for the security of border checkpoints.
6. There will be advance notification of troops carrying arms on entering another side's controlled areas.
7. Liaison offices will be opened as soon as possible at Taunggyi, the capital city of Shan State; Kholam, where the Central Eastern Command is based; Kengtung, Tachilek and Monghsat, eastern Shan State; and trading offices in Muse and Namkham, northern Shan State.
8. Shan State local governments will be responsible for the support of education and to set up legal trade firms for economic development.
9. SSA and Burma government will continue to discuss for the regional economic development.
10. SSA and Burma government will work together on the elimination of drugs.
11. Burma government agrees in principle SSA proposals at the meeting on 16 January and further topics will be discussed during the upcoming meetings.⁴

FRENCH FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER JUPPE VISITS BURMA

French Minister for Foreign and European Affairs Alain Juppé arrived in Yangon on 14 January for a three-day official visit to Burma.⁵ During his visit, Minister Juppé met President U Thein Sein⁶, the speakers of both house of parliament U Shwe Mann⁷ and U Khin Aung Myint⁸ and his Burmese counterpart U Wunna Maung Lwin⁹ in Nay Pyi Taw, and discussed the political developments in Burma and exchanged views on promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries. In addition to his official meeting, he also met representatives from several opposition

³ Union level peace-making group, RCSS/SSA peace-making group sign 11 initial agreement – http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM_2012-01-18.pdf (NLM) 18 January 2012 (p. 10)

⁴ SSA and regime sign new agreement - http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4351:ssa-and-regime-sign-new-agreement&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (SHAN) 18 January 2012

⁵ Delegation led by French Minister for Foreign Affairs arrives - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 January 2012 (p. 9)

⁶ President U Thein Sein receives French Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Affairs – http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM_2012-01-17.pdf (NLM) 17 January 2012 (p. 1)

⁷ Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives French Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs - http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM_2012-01-17.pdf (NLM) 17 January 2012 (p. 7)

⁸ Amyotha Hluttaw speaker receives French Minister – http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM_2012-01-17.pdf (NLM) 17 January 2012 (p. 2)

⁹ Union Foreign Affairs Minister meets French counterpart - http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM_2012-01-17.pdf (NLM) 17 January 2012 (p. 11)

and ethnic political parties at the French Culture Centre in Yangon.¹⁰ Concurrently, the French Ambassador at large for cooperation in Asia Jacques Valade of French Republic signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Union Minister for Information and for Culture U Kyaw Hsan on cooperation in the cultural sectors between the two nations as well as the potential for cooperation in the information sector.¹¹

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Minister Juppé is the first French foreign minister and highest level French diplomat to ever visit Burma. He also met National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and awarded her France's highest honor, Commander in the National Order of the Legion d'Honneur. Afterwards he announced that the European Union will respond "in concrete terms" to recent reforms by Burma's regime.¹²

JAPANESE ECONOMIC MINISTER VISITS BURMA

Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Yukio Edano met with senior government ministers with the aim of promoting bilateral cooperation on promotion of trade and investment, cooperation in energy, minerals and natural resources between the two countries during an official visit to Burma. On 13 and 14 January he held talks with the Minister for Industry U Thein Htaik¹³, Minister for National Economic Planning & Development U Tin Naing Thein¹⁴ and Minister for Energy U Than Htay¹⁵. He also met the President of the Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry U Win Aung and discussed matters on promoting cooperation in investment and economic sectors between the two countries, as well as the investment of Japanese entrepreneurs in the Dawei Deep-Sea Port Project and the Thilawa Port Project in Yangon.¹⁶

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Minister Edano visited Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon on 12 January and conveyed Japan's readiness to support the country's economy to assist its fledgling democratization process. "Stabilizing the economy can improve the life of the citizens. ...We hope to cooperate (to that end)," Edano told Suu Kyi at her home. Japan plans to help Burma improve its electric power system and other infrastructure, as well as to expand bilateral trade. Edano's visit is the first in nearly 12 years by a Japanese trade minister to Burma. The last visit was in 2000 when then International Trade and Industry Minister Takashi Fukaya attended an international conference. Edano's visit comes just weeks after Foreign Minister Koichiro Genba visited Burma, becoming the first Japanese foreign minister to visit the country in 9 years.¹⁷

¹⁰ French Foreign and European Affairs Minister meets political parties –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-16.pdf> (NLM) 16 January 2012 (p. 2)

¹¹ Myanmar, France to further strengthen cooperation in cultural sector -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 January 2012 (p. 7)

¹² French foreign minister meets Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi -
<http://www.france24.com/en/20120115-french-minister-meet-burmese-pro-democracy-leader> (France24) 16 January 2012

¹³ Japanese Economic Minister calls on Union Mines Minister -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 January 2012 (p. 9)

¹⁴ Myanmar, Japan eye closer cooperation in economic and industrial sectors -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 January 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

¹⁵ Japan to invest in Myanmar's energy sector -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 January 2012 (p. 7)

¹⁶ Japanese minister meets UMFCCI president -
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 January 2012 (p. 9)

¹⁷ Edano meets Suu Kyi, vows support for Myanmar economy to aid reform –
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120113a9.html> (Japan Times) 13 January 2012

PRO-SANCTIONS US SENATOR MCCONNELL MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT TO BURMA

United States Senator Mitch McConnell, the Republican minority leader, arrived in Burma on 15 January for a four-day official visit to the country. The Senator held separate meetings with President U Thein Sein, Lower House Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin in Nay Pyi Taw, where they discussed the country's political developments; promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation on matters of mutual interests. Senator McConnell expressed his acknowledgement to the Lower House Speaker of the political reforms in Burma, describing them as a welcome change. He also revealed his support for works of the Hluttaw, agreeing to establish bilateral cooperation between the two parliaments. He added that magnanimous actions of the President, Hluttaw Speakers and the government were distinct and stressed that the US believes in Burma's democratization process.¹⁸

Unofficial Media

Senator McConnell said that U.S. officials will be heavily influenced by the views of Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi as they consider whether to ease economic sanctions. After meeting Suu Kyi, McConnell told reporters that the appropriateness of lifting sanctions depended very much on how she felt about the direction of the reforms taking place in Burma as well as on the results of the 1 April by-elections and the ability of the government to make peace with all of the country's ethnic armed groups. He acknowledged that real change was taking place inside Burma and confirmed his approval of the recent announcement by the US government to upgrade diplomatic relations between the two countries.¹⁹

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NORWAY LIFTS SANCTIONS - NO LONGER URGES COMPANIES TO REFRAIN FROM TRADING WITH BURMA

The Norwegian government has decided to lift trade and investment sanctions it had imposed on Burma and will now encourage companies to invest there. The decision was made in response to the progress being made in Burma including the release of hundreds of political prisoners on 13 January under a government amnesty. At the same time Norway will continue to align itself with the European Union (EU) sanctions regime, but the recent decision was taken in response to the Burmese government implementing reforms. Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre is scheduled to visit the country in the near future, which will provide an opportunity to discuss the way forward.²⁰

¹⁸ US Senator Mr Addison Mitchell McConnell arrives in Yangon - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-16.pdf> 16 January 2012 (p. 9) / President U Thein Sein receives US Senator Mr Addison Mitchell McConnell and party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 January 2012 (p. 1) / US Senator, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker vow to cooperate between two parliaments - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 January 2012 (p. 2) / FM meets United States Senator - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2012-01-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 January 2012 (p.2)

¹⁹ US Senate to consider democracy leader's views on Burma's sanctions - <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/asia/southeast/McConnell-Suu-Kyis-Views-to-Influence-Burma-Sanctions-Decision-137486288.html> (VOA) 17 January 2011

²⁰ Press release: Norway no longer urges companies to refrain from trading with Myanmar - http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/press/news/2012/trading_with_myanmar.html?id=669083 (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) 14 January 2012

FORMER SNLD LEADER AND RELEASED POLITICAL PRISONER REQUESTED TO MERGE WITH SNDP AND RUN IN ELECTIONS

The Chairman of the de-registered Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) Hkun Tun Oo and Sai Ai Pao of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) held a meeting on 18 January to discuss the possibility of combining the two parties as one to contest the by-elections in April 2012. Sai Ai Pao also urged Hkun Tun Oo to consider running as a candidate for the National Assembly in Shan State Constituency (3). However, the latter said he needed to consult with his party regarding re-registering and joining forces with the SNDP.

Hkun Tun Oo co-founded the SNLD, which won 2nd place nationwide and 1st place state wide in the 1990 elections. He and several party colleagues were arrested in 2005 and charged with high treason and other offenses after the government accused them of launching movements to disintegrate national unity soon after they attended a meeting of many ethnic minorities. He was released from serving his 93-year prison sentence as part of the government's general amnesty on 13 January.

Sai Ai Pao was elected General Secretary of SNLD in 1989, but left the party in 1996. According to SNLD sources, in the 2010 elections, Constituency No.3 was won by USDP candidate Dr Sai Mawk Kham, who later became Vice-President in U Thein Sein's government.²¹

ANALYSIS

Since taking office in March 2010, President U Thein Sein has been introducing democratic reforms in an unprecedented manner, while at the same time reaching out to ethnic armed groups to end years of fighting. During his short time office, he has suspended the Chinese-backed multi-billion Myitsone Dam Project, released political prisoners and met Aung San Suu Kyi.

In acknowledging the bold steps being taken by the government in Nay Pyi Taw, the US has announced it would be normalizing diplomatic relations, while French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said that his country along with the EU would respond "positively and in concrete terms". Similarly, Norway has followed suit by saying that it would no longer bar Norwegian companies from doing business in Burma, though it would still maintain and align itself with the existing EU sanctions regime. While the international community's actions in sending high-level diplomats, upgrading diplomatic ties and promoting trade and investment are all crucial for Burma, they are not enough. Under the circumstances, a meeting convened at the international level to jointly address the needs of Burma may prove useful and should be considered an effective option to aid the country.

The recent cease-fire agreement with the RCSS/SSA and the peace talks with Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) are important first steps towards national reconciliation, though not an end in themselves. While there is a long way to go before a comprehensive peace agreement is reached, the peace talks are crucial in ending the on-going clashes between the government forces and ethnic armed groups so that a genuine and inclusive political dialogue can take place.

²¹ Hkun Tun Oo requested to join SNDP for elections - http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4357:hkun-tun-oo-requested-to-join-sndp-for-elections&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 19 January 2012 / Ethnic Shan leader in Myanmar to re-register party - <http://news.yahoo.com/ethnic-shan-leader-myanmar-register-party-135427710.html> (AP) 19 January 2012 / SNLD: Shan leaders freed, fight goes on - http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4340:snld-shan-leaders-freed-fight-goes-on&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (Shan Herald) 13 January 2012